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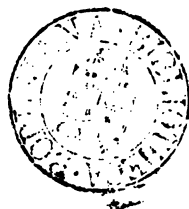
THE
QUEEN'S LIEGES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

"Live thou,
Whate'er betide, to tell my simple story,
Lest slander blot a luckless maiden's fame,
And no one left to cheer her memory."

THE MOUNTAINEERS.

VOL. III.



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CHAPTER I.

OCTAVIAN. ————— “Ruffian, hold !
Advance thy blade the tithe part of a hair
To harm a helpless woman, by my soul !
—————thy turban'd head
Shall roll a trunkless ball upon the ground.”

WHILST Abu Amir was relating to his guest the sad history of his past life, a far different recital was listened to by his child, in that plaisance which had been the scene of his extremest woe. Azayda had sought her aged teacher with the dawn, and convincing him that she had not been unheedful of his instructions, besought the fulfilment of his promise.

“How unlike are thy teachings from aught I have ever heard before !” she exclaimed, as once more seated in the quiet arbour, with her hands clasped on her knee, she regarded the

venerable slave with eyes that seemed to drink in his gentle words. "But I would fain know wherein consisted the fault of the hapless Eve ; —why was the plucking of that tempting fruit so fatal ?"

"Because," replied Manuel,—she thereby *disobeyed* her Creator. Ah, there is no sin but disobedience ! for were we ever obedient to His law, we should be incapable of crime. Oh Azayda, pure and innocent child ! beware thou never consent to sin, which alone can deprive thee of that Eden which was forfeited by our first parents."

"Didst thou not tell me it was already lost ?"

"Is then the promised redemption already forgotten ?"

"Ah no !—go on, I pray thee,"—and again that dazzling glance rested on the lips whence flowed the words of kings and prophets, and even of God himself.

"I am now about to tell thee of the fulfilment of those promises :—bring every faculty of thy

soul, my child, to this wondrous theme,—bow down thy spirit in humble reception of the truths I teach, for only by the humble and clean of heart may the whispers of faith be heard ! But first let me ask the Most High to bless my words, and thee !”

The good man prostrated himself on the earth, and bowing his head on his hands, spent a few moments in silent prayer,—then with humble reverence commenced the ineffable theme of a world's redemption. His earnest manner and solemn words attuned the soul of Azayda to receive with fitting awe the glorious tidings he brought her, and thus was she saved from the callous selfishness into which the heart is too often hardened by overweening indulgence. Gratitude, and a generous charity, for the first time warmed her young heart ; and, as she listened to the short sketch Manuel gave her of the life of our Lord, deluged her face with delightful tears. And when at length the bitter sorrows of Calvary became the theme, the teacher

mingled his tears with hers ; and the intense feeling with which he related the history of the Passion, gave a vivid distinctness to the scenes he described, that could never have been produced by the cold recital of one in whose heart divine love had no place. Long did that young mind hover around a spot so hallowed ; but the glorious mystery of the resurrection introduced another and most absorbing topic,—the soul's hopes of immortality !

Who that watcheth the first dawning of the human intellect, has failed to mark the rapturous delight with which the infant mind watches the first glimmer of light from beyond the dismal grave, that forms so stern a boundary to this bright world. Ere the lisping tongue can frame in distinct phrases its passing wants, tell the young being of God, of Heaven, of Immortality, and its sinless soul will eagerly drink in the blessed words, as if they indeed constituted the spirit's food.

And thus did Azayda receive those glorious

hopes denied to women by the Moorish creed ; and once convinced of her immortal destiny, beheld him who had imparted to her such glad tidings, with filial respect, and reverence and love.

The steps of Houadir were now heard approaching.—“Thou must leave me, maiden,” said the old man tenderly,—“yet ere departing receive a Christian’s blessing !” The wondering girl knelt as he bade her by his side, and placing one hand on her jewelled tresses, he raised his eyes to heaven, as with the other he made the sacred sign over her bowed head, and blessed her in the name of the Triune Deity.

As Azayda arose, he took a small manuscript from his bosom : “Behold,” he said, “I have copied for thee the history of the Redeemer’s life and teachings, written by one who wept beneath his cross ! Thou canst by its means fix on thy memory all I have told thee ;”—and placing in her hand a copy of one of the Gospels, they parted.

How deep and solemn were the thoughts of Azayda now ! how did she, whilst alone with her attendant, revolve in her mind again and again the teachings of Manuel, and more especially the news of eternal life which he had brought home to her own bosom ! To live for ever !—the exultation of her soul, recognizing in those blest tidings the true response of its mysterious yearnings, gave her conviction of their truth. She looked not on the earth with less of love, but casting her eyes towards the boundless sky, felt that its fathomless depths awoke in her soul an intense longing which nothing terrestrial could satisfy. The love and mercy of the Deity were now unfolded to her, who had hitherto only heard of his justice and his power,—and as she meditated on those sweet attributes, her heart poured forth its first fervent breathings of divine charity !

But she must learn to serve this just and perfect being,—Manuel had spoke of faith, of hope, of charity, by which three virtues He willeth to

be worshipped ;—she looked around her, no one was near to instruct her eager mind, only Houadir sat assorting the silks for her embroidery, and now and then regarding the flushed cheeks and downcast or flashing orbs of her young mistress with no little curiosity.

“ My lute, Houadir ; I cannot now bend over these intricate tracteries ;—I pray thee give me my lute.” She swept her delicate fingers across its silver wires, and drew thence a low murmuring melody,—accompanying it with words of joyous but undefined meaning, smooth and flowing as the night-bird’s song !

Every moment was now seized by Azayda, of procuring information from Manuel. Little difficulty attended their meetings, for Houadir was easily eluded, and Abu Amir, who seldom approached his daughter’s apartments, never entered her garden.

During her childhood, Azayda had been permitted to ramble at will over most parts of the desolate mansion, and her occasional intercourse

with her father usually took place in some of the spacious halls which occupied the basement story of the quinta. It was only within the last few months, that, admonished of the restraints imposed on womanhood by the Moorish customs, she had been gently requested by her indulgent parent to keep her own apartments. Her unchastened spirit had chafed under the mild command, for it was untrained to captivity; and discontent, increased by the additional contradictions imposed, and the powerful incentive to curiosity given by the presence of De Lacy in the hall of Abu Amir, might have embittered a disposition left to nature's training, had not the lessons of Manuel come most opportunely to her aid

Under his guidance her young and artless mind became invigorated, and even the expression of her delicate features began to reflect the light of awakening intelligence. She learned to pray, and when alone, found a sweet peace steal over her soul, as kneeling with downcast eyes, and

hands clasped, in the manner her preceptor had taught her, she humbly murmured again and again the holy words linked together by the world's Redeemer. Manuel initiated her too in the language of the bells, which faintly came, like angelic voices, even into the recesses of her Moorish bower. He explained to her the meaning of each peel that at regular hours was wafted from a distant convent; he taught her to join in the angelus, conscious the while that with her lonely prayer went up to heaven thrice every day, the offerings of thousands of hearts, in commemoration of the Incarnation of the Saviour. Soon the sound of these plaintive bells became as the voices of familiar friends, reminding her of devotions which might otherwise have been forgotten; and two peals were elevated to unselfish petitions,—the matins bell asked her prayers for her kind father, and the pensive toll of complin implored her to remember the sweet mother of whom her mind retained no image.

The work prospered,—for in the soil tilled by

that wise old slave, no prejudice, or hatred, or evil passion contended against things divine. Azayda was undoubting as a little child,—delighted with the beauty of the doctrines she imbibed, and grateful for the peace they bestowed.

The absorbing studies to which she devoted every moment, saved her from the danger to which the imprudence of Houadir had exposed her, by imparting the vicinity of the Christian knight; and if she sometimes longed to peep through the closed jealousies, she remembered her father's commands; and the solemn warnings Manuel had given her, of the guilt of disobedience, preserved her from infringing them.

Meanwhile, the wounds of De Lacy were healing rapidly; already he began to take gentle exercise within his chamber; the spacious hall whence they had feared to remove him during the first days of his sojourn within the quinta being still his place of repose. By the

kindness of his host, he had been enabled to communicate several times with Edith, and had at length appointed a day for his return to Belem. Impatiently did the young knight count the lagging hours, and but for the fear of wounding the feelings of his generous host, would have gladly risked some delay in his return to convalescence, in order to exchange the splendid solitude of that solemn dwelling for the simple home where his sister's beloved society awaited him.

One morning as he paced his apartment, and congratulated himself on the firmness of his step, he was surprised by the sudden appearance of his host, whose countenance was lit up with an excitement most unusual. His long flowing robes were exchanged for a riding dress, his crooked falchion was suspended from his girdle, and with the folds of his white turban were mingled chains of steel, which rendered it capable of resisting violence. "Thou art surprised, O Christian," said Abu Amir, after the

first morning greetings had been given, "at my unexpected appearance,—and doubtless art guessing that a duty, as novel as unlooked for, hath attired me for a journey of some importance. Such is indeed the case,—a messenger arrived here at break of day, bearing from one of the corregidors of Beira, a description of a caitiff, now secured in his comarca, in every respect corresponding to that fell assassin of whom I have been for so many years in quest. Thou wilt not wonder that I lose no time in hastening to identify the villain; the few preparations for my journey are in fact completed, and I have only to request thy indulgence of my discourtesy in quitting my honoured guest,—to assure thee of my speedy return,—and request thou wilt, meantime, command the ready obedience of my slaves."

The Moor spoke with unwonted haste, and De Lacy perceiving that he was anxious to avoid delay, forbore to detain him beyond what was necessary for a brief reply to his hospitable

care, and the expression of earnest wishes for the success of his mission ; though he would gladly have taken advantage of this unexpected demand on the Moor, to return immediately to Belem. He received his hasty adieus, however, without hinting at his wish ; and throwing himself on his couch, busied himself with wondering what strange influence had ruled his destiny since he entered Portugal. To return to Belem before Abu Amir's expedition was ended, would be impossible ; and as he considered how many chances might occur to detain the Moor in Beira, he half repented that he had suffered him to depart without bidding adieu to his hospitality.

Whilst Sir Alfred reclined discontented and uneasy on his luxurious couch, gazing listlessly into the court, and half wishing that some insinuating pebble would choke its ever-splashing fountain, he became aware of an unusual bustle among the slaves. Couches, and ottomans, and cushions were brought into the court, and

piled against the marble pillars that supported the opposite alcove ;—and now and then Houadir appeared, unusual anxiety on her brow, and her motions accompanied with much bustle and excitement. Her tendance on his nearly healed wound was that morning brief and hurried, but in the course of it the knight contrived to learn that the good dame was taking advantage of the absence of Abu Amir, (to whom the least change in the monotonous routine of his daily existence was unendurable,) to subject the baths—which, with their numerous apartments, occupied the basement story, beneath the women's apartments—to sundry extensive scourings and ablutions.

It was some relief to De Lacy to perceive signs of life in his silent paradise, and as he amused himself with watching the busy slaves who were perpetually passing and repassing across the court, he found himself beguiled of some portion of his disappointment and impatience. But his chief resource was a small office-book which had

smoothed many a tedious day—for to its aid he had flown as soon as his returning strength enabled him to read ; and admonished by the distant bells that stole to his quiet abiding place, he managed to time his devotions to the canonical hours.

As the hot noon approached, the slaves stole away, and De Lacy too shared in the welcome siesta, nor murmured now at the breathless silence which rendered his repose so calm and refreshing.

The renewed bustle, however, caused it to be more brief than usual; the slaves were roused by the indefatigable matron, who was anxious to restore the mansion to its wonted order on her lord's return. But the task was great, the baths with their numerous and spacious apartments extensive ; the sun set ere the work was completed, and the hours of labour being past, what remained to be done was reserved for the morrow. Great would have been the astonishment of Abu Amir could he have seen the disarrangement of

his favourite apartments; all their luxurious cushions and couches being left for the night piled against the pillars of the court.

With the calm of evening, silence once more surrounded De Lacy, who long paced his hall with a steady and firm step, finding some consolation in the assurance every effort gave him, that his hours of helplessness were past. Presently the angelus bell called to him from afar, and after joining in that universal devotion, he resumed his couch and composed his mind for his evening meditation. Nor whilst dwelling on the subject he had selected, was the knight wholly unconscious of the sweet song of a nightingale which floated at intervals on the evening breeze, startling the groves after each breathless pause with a melodious gush of rapturous sounds that seemed the very voice of gladness.

But either wearied of her song, or startled by approaching footsteps, the strain suddenly ceased, and uninterrupted silence surrounded the quinta and its bowers. Where were the thoughts of

De Lacy now? In his distant home, perchance, surrounded by England's fertile vallies, and busky dells; or with the gallant youth, the companion of his boyhood, to find whose grave he had undertaken a perilous journey into the heart of Spain. Some such thoughts were busy at his heart, for a regretful sadness gradually wrapt his soul in a deep melancholy.

As he thus reposed under the influence of a pensive cast of thought unusual to his joyous spirit, a shrill cry struck his startled ear;—he sprung from his couch and listened; the scream was repeated, and satisfied that it came from the opposite apartment, he hesitated not a moment, but rushing across the court, sprung—by the aid of the couches not yet returned to the bath—to the top of the arcade. The fretted roof of the light structure crumbled beneath his tread, but the rapidity of his movement prevented its giving way beneath him, for he had caught the trellis-work of the balcony, and flung himself thereon, ere the fragments his foot displaced had reached the ground.

The jealousies were in an instant thrust aside, and as he entered the saloon, the sound of something falling heavily directed him to the mirador, which he entered ere a minute had elapsed since the first cry of terror startled him from his reverie. He remembered not that he was unarmed, and weak from his severe illness, still less dreamed of the sacredness of the precinct on which he was entering,—but without a pause passed over the guarded threshold of the zenana.

To explain the scene that presented itself to his eyes, it is necessary to return to the moment when Houadir, wearied with the unwonted exertions of the day, attended her young mistress. Azayda's meditations on the instructions Manuel had given her in the course of the day, were broken by the entrance of the matron, whose office in a Moorish family, half duenna and half bower-maiden, possessed no ordinary privileges. As the lady listened to the uninteresting detail of the

mischances of the day, her hand unconsciously toyed with a string of seed pearls which encircled her neck. On a sudden, as if actuated by some momentary impulse, she drew by it, from her bosom, a small silken bag to which the ends of the chain were attached, and interrupting Houadir's narrative, said :—"Thou hast always evaded my inquiries respecting *this*—now tell me, is it a talisman, or an amulet of supposed mystic virtue?"

The countenance of Houadir became overcast, at which Azayda was not surprised,—such being always the consequence of this inquiry ; but, as if determined no longer to be refused the information she sought, she repeated her inquiry in a more decided tone. "Alas!" replied Houadir, "have I not told thee thou must prize it as the best treasure in thy keeping? Let that suffice."

"Is it then a mezoozah?"*

* An amulet composed of double-wove parchment, and covered with mystic words.

“ Alas ! I know not.”

“ Tell me at least how it came round my neck ; my earliest recollections recall this string of pearls, and the small silken parcel attached thereto. Thou hast been near me from my birth, and must know who placed it here, and wherefore :—answer me.”

Houadir's only reply was to entreat her charge to refrain from questioning her on the subject.

“ Thou wilt not deny that it is an amulet, O Houadir,—then thus I fling it from me !” and she cast it to the further side of the room. Houadir sprung from her seat, and taking from the floor the mysterious chain, burst into tears, and throwing it over the neck of Azayda, murmured,—“ Despise it not,—for know, O importunate maiden ! that the last hours of thy sweet mother's life were spent in forming it ; her own hands placed it around thy neck with countless blessings, and in her dying hour she besought me that it might never be thence removed.”

“ Alas, Houadir !” said Azayda, reverently pressing to her lips the now precious bequest, “ why didst thou not tell me this before ?”

“ Because the memory of those days is to me as the waters of Marah !” replied Houadir, swaying her form backwards and forwards, as seated on a low ottoman she bent over her folded hands.

“ And did my lost parent leave no charge respecting it ?” urged Azayda.

“ Ah yes ; well do I remember her words, and the fond affection with which she wept over thy young brow ; and kissing thy lips and unconscious eyes, murmured her eternal adieus.”

“ Not eternal, Houadir !” exclaimed the maiden, raising her tearful eyes ; “ Oh, not eternal, if my prayers be heard !—but I forget—proceed.”

“ Ah me ! I see her now, looking with reluctance from thy unreplying countenance, on which she yearned to gaze whilst yet her fond glance was undimmed by death,—and fixing on

me her luminous eyes, she faintly said : ‘ Hou-
adir, when my child has accomplished fourteen
years of her life, bid her procure this inscription
to be explained to her ;’ and she shewed me on
the silken talisman unintelligible words, then
bright and fresh; but now perchance effaced.”

Azayda once more drew from her bosom the
little bag ; springing from her couch, she kissed
it thrice with oriental reverence, and approached
the window, hoping to descry by the dim light of
the closing day the characters mentioned by her
attendant. “ I should not have failed,” continued
the latter, “ to give this information at the
appointed time, which will now soon be here,
but—”. As Azayda stood beside the open window,
pondering still over the half obliterated inscrip-
tion, a slight noise attracted her attention towards
the balcony, and interrupting the words of Hou-
adir with a piercing scream, she flew to the other
side of the apartment.

At the same moment a man leaped over the
slight trellice, and followed with unhallowed

feet the retreating form of the terrified girl. Houadir with a wild cry of terror threw herself before her young mistress, and for a moment encumbered and retarded the steps of the intruder by clinging around him.

It was *but* for a moment,—tearing himself from her grasp he flung her with violence on the floor, where she lay stunned and helpless; and drawing a broad blade from his girdle, sprung with a cry of exultation towards the corner where cowered the almost fainting form of the defenceless maiden.

With ruthless grasp he seized her fair round arm, and bore her—as a falcon might bear a wounded dove—towards the window. With a ghastly grin he raised his glittering blade above the bosom of the hapless girl, who closing her eyes strove to recall the prayer that Manuel had taught her. Her fate appeared inevitable, but ere the up-raised arm could descend, it was rendered powerless,—a blow from the hand of De Lacy struck down the fell assassin, and snatching from his

grasp the now senseless form of his purposed victim, the young Christian bore her to a couch, and bathed her hushed features with some fragrant water, which stood near in a vase of crystal.

Her starry eyes unclosed, but Azayda gazed for some moments on the stranger who knelt beside her, ere her bewildered senses recognised the Christian guest of her father ; then blushing deeply, she put forth her hand, essaying to shroud her features in their accustomed veil. But in the struggle with the assassin it had been torn from her head, and De Lacy guessing at the cause of her confusion, averted his gaze, which had been unconsciously rivetted on her sylph-like form, and in doing so, beheld the revived assassin making stealthy attempts to regain unnoted the open window. The knight sprung to his feet ; but the villain perceiving himself detected, with one bound cleared the room, and flung himself from the balcony.

The first step that Sir Alfred made to prevent

his escape, was arrested by a cry which burst from the lips of Azayda, who forgetting her shyness, sprung from her couch, and laying one hand on his arm, pointed with the other to his breast, exclaiming, "Oh Allah! thou art slain!" De Lacy following the direction of her finger, beheld his tunic assuming a deep and widening dye of crimson, just over the scarcely closed orifice of his wound. Houadir, at this moment, all pale and trembling joined them,—and had scarce gazed on the knight, ere she wrung her hands, crying, "Oh, Azrael! the wound is re-opened!—the wound so nearly healed!" With extreme agitation, and disregard of De Lacy's remonstrances, whose growing faintness indeed rendered his opposition of little avail; the matron hastily tore aside the knight's tunic, and used every means her skill suggested to stay the sanguine stream.

By this time the alarmed slaves appeared in the saloon, and Manuel, with a voice that trembled with anxiety, requested admission at the

door of the mirador. Azayda eagerly welcomed his approach, and implored his aid. Leading him to the couch whereon the lifeless form of her preserver had sunk down, she wept and prayed by turns, whilst the old man aided the still trembling Houadir to stanch the blood that was gushing with fearful rapidity from the breast of the young warrior.

CHAPTER II.

MIRANDA.

"There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple :
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,
Good things will strive to dwell with't."

FERDINAND.

"———Full many a lady
I've eyed with best regard ; and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear : for several virtues
Have I liked several women ; never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she ow'd,
And put it to the foil. But you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless are created
Of every creature's best."

The Tempest.

ONCE more was the young Englishman on the couch of sickness ; but in far different circumstances from those in which he had formerly counted the tedious moments. Turning a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Houadir, Azayda had peremptorily forbid the removal of Sir

Alfred (which the matron had incautiously admitted might cost him his life) from the mirador. The native self-will of the maiden now came to the aid of her gratitude, and she insisted on her preserver remaining in her bower, at least till her father's return.

There accordingly he was assiduously tended by Houadir and Manuel; and a guard of slaves, by command of their youthful mistress, kept alternate watch in the garden, lest the marauder should repeat his visit.

Azayda had, either unconscious of the strict discipline of her race, or forgetful of forms, bent over the bleeding form of De Lacy with looks of agony, whilst he remained insensible. But when at length the wound was closed, and he opened his eyes, she covered her face, and glided from the room. Nor ventured she again into his presence, though her affectionate and grateful heart yearned for the privilege of watching beside his couch; gladly would she have exchanged, to purchase the envied office, her youth and loveliness, for the age and wrinkles of Houadir.

But that duty being forbidden, she yet omitted not such slight attentions as might be rendered without reproach. Daily the loveliest and most fragrant flowers refreshed his chamber and strewed his couch ; she made it her own peculiar care that occasionally during the day, the cool and fragrant waters (which by a contrivance peculiar to the Moors were made to lave in a refreshing shower one portion of the wall of the mirador) should duly refresh the air he breathed ; and ere the hour of the siesta, and again as evening drew nigh, she would sit in her deserted saloon, and accompany her lute with some soft plaintive strain, hoping thereby to soothe him to repose. Nor failed she to question Houadir, if her flowers had been remarked, or her song commended ; though the discreet matron soon grew chary of her replies, and each day devoutly prayed for her lord's return.

Sir Alfred meanwhile lay in a state of pitiable weakness ; delirium and pain divided his hours between them, his only intervals of rest being

procured by those sweet low tones that at intervals stole to his couch of suffering, and beguiling him of his pain, wrapped him in blissful dreams. Then did his slumbers bring before him the innocent being he had saved from destruction,—sometimes gliding amid the remembered scenes with which his childhood had been familiar, at others mingling with the stately dames of the Portuguese court. Not unfrequently his visions pictured the sight to which his eyes had opened after the swoon which followed his almost fatal excitement; when the delicately formed features of the Moorish maid were in her intense anxiety drawn so near his face, that her fragrant breath fanned his cheek, and the large fawn-like eyes looked into his with an expression of tenderest solicitude;—or when starting with confusion on finding herself observed, she modestly veiled her graceful head, and disappeared.

One evening as Azayda, with her lute on her knee, sat alone in her saloon, breathing in melt-

ing tones a Moorish roundelaye, the door suddenly opened, and her father stood before her.

With unbounded joy she flung herself on his bosom, and as she clung to that haven of safety, wept at the thought of the danger from which it could not have saved her.

"I requested thee not to enter this saloon, my beloved child," said Abu Amir, as returning her caress, he kissed the tears from her gentle eyes.

"Ah, my father ! thou knowest not then the danger that hath assailed me ! But for thy Christian guest, Azayda had been even now in her tomb !"

The bleached lips of Abu Amir refused utterance to the questions he yearned to ask, and he folded his child in speechless agony to his bosom. "Allah be praised !" at length he sighed,— "thou art safe, my best treasure ! sole stay of an existence over which dark and evil influences alone preside."

"Say not so, O my father ; for it was by a blessed interposition that the Christian knight

rushed with winged feet to my rescue, and by one blow of his hand crushed the assassin who sought the life of thy child. Behold!" she continued, gently drawing her sire towards the window of the saloon,—“behold how the all-gracious Allah supported the flying footsteps of my deliverer. See! the slight cedar roof of the alcove was scarce crushed beneath his tread.”

Houadir now entered from the mirador, and her exclamation of delight on beholding her master was succeeded by a circumstantial account of the attack on her young mistress, and her miraculous escape. Azayda the while, trembling and pale as the peril that had menaced her was vividly brought to her recollection, nestling like a frightened bird in her father's bosom. But when the entrance of the wounded knight was described, and the promptitude of that fell blow by which he dashed the murderer to the earth,—the Moorish maiden displayed the love of heroic deeds that ever marked her race; and raising her dark eyes to those of

Abu Amir, met his glance of astonishment with one of pride and triumph.

The Moor listened to the recital of Houadir in silence, then slowly pacing the saloon, murmured, —“ And 'twas for this I was decoyed on a bootless mission to a distant province ! Ah, yes !— I cannot be mistaken,—it must be ;—none other but that fell savage would dream of harming a creature so fair and innocent ! And is then his revenge yet unsated ?—and hath he tarried until my child's intelligence and beauty should have well-nigh reached their full perfection, in order that the blow might be more fatal to my peace ? O Allah ! have the fiends prevailed against thy hosts ? or hath some unheeded crime of mine deprived me of thy protection ?”

“ Father,” said Azayda, clinging to his arm as he continued his disordered steps,—“ doubt not the perpetual watchfulness and bounty of Allah ! Behold, whilst I called on the All-perfect Deity in the agony of my fear, I was delivered from the uplifted weapon of the destroyer ! But thou

hast not heard," she added, "at what peril I was saved. The wound which thy benevolence had closed, was re-opened by the rescue of thy child, and the life of thy guest well nigh sacrificed to preserve mine. Rather than increase his risk I commanded that the fainting form of the Christian should not be removed from the spot where he sunk down ;—Azayda now occupies apartments next to thine, O my father ; for the stranger, my preserver, reposes on the cushions of my mirador.

"Wilt thou not supply what the timidity of a maiden left unattempted ; and let thy grateful acknowledgments assure him that Azayda's life is dear to Abu Amir?" She led her father to the door of the mirador, then pausing, whispered, —"It may be that he sleeps,—even now I was endeavouring to soothe with the sound of my lute his hours of languor and suffering."

Abu Amir softly entered the chamber, but as Azayda had suggested, De Lacy slept.

"My child," said the Moor, retreating noise-

lessly into the saloon,—“gratitude to thy preserver is pleasing to thy father, and acceptable to Allah ; but it becomes not the child of Abu Amir to be as a singing girl in the chamber of the Goth. Thy father henceforth will watch over and requite the brave Christian, and thou mayest now, as best becomes thy ripening beauties, seclude thyself in those apartments thou hast chosen for the present to occupy.”

Azayda made no reply, but silently pressing the hand of her father to her forehead, meekly withdrew.

From the hour in which Sir Alfred, awaking, beheld Abu Amir beside him, and received his warmest and heartfelt expressions of gratitude for the preservation of his child, the soft strains that had hitherto blessed his slumbers, soothed his weary hours no more. The flowers, too, that had hitherto decorated the chamber, were unrenewed, and he thus detected the gentle influence that had surrounded his couch with their sweetness

and beauty. The thought that he should never again behold that vision of innocence and beauty, caused him to dwell more minutely on every circumstance of his hurried interview with her; and in the apartment he now occupied he was surrounded by mementos of the deity that had presided there.

Abu Amir watched over his youthful guest with the intense solicitude of a father, and to his skilful treatment, the evil symptoms which had threatened the life of Sir Alfred slowly gave way. But the time appointed for his return to Belem arrived without its being possible to remove him thither, save at the utmost risk. Again, therefore, missives were despatched to his sister, the intention of which was to relieve her of uneasiness respecting his prolonged absence; but he received in return a letter of tender reproaches, praying him to inform her of the real cause of this new delay, and describing torturing doubts and anxieties which had laid her on a bed

of sickness. De Lacy, trembling for the health of his Edith, was at a loss whether to inform her of the truth, or again attempt a subterfuge which had so ill succeeded. After revolving again and again the two alternatives, he confided his doubts and fears to the Moor, who gravely replied : "The tortures of suspense are as the winds of the Solano, which relax the fibres of our frame, and torture the brain to phrenzy ; but as the worst truth in thy case excludeth not hope, wherefore deny to the child of thy father a knowledge of thy misfortunes? Allah Akbar ! God is Great !"

Manuel was accordingly once more dismissed ; not, however, bearing a letter, but authorised to reply to the inquiries of Edith.

In the meantime, Azayda drooped in her lonely bower. Excluded from her beloved garden, and consequently from the converse of Manuel, which had of late given a direction to her mind, whilst fixing in it habits of reflection ; she turned

from her embroidery, her few books, and even her beloved lute, with listless apathy, and found the chief amusement of her solitude in giving way to thoughts which appeared sanctified by gratitude.

Never since her childhood had Houadir been so important to Azayda,—for from her alone she gained daily information respecting De Lacy. Unheeded was the boding shake of the head which always replied to the eager questions of the maiden, who knew not the meaning of the oft-repeated warning of the sage matron: “I said from the first no good would come of it!”

Abu Amir saw his daughter more rarely than ever; duty, as well as pleasure, detained him almost constantly beside the couch of his gallant friend. Having satisfied himself by minute inquiries respecting the assassin, that he was without doubt his old enemy the Gitano, he was perpetually haunted by the fear lest he

should return, and eluding the guards, sacrifice the wounded knight to his disappointed revenge.

CHAPTER III.

"If sweetest thing thus failed thee with my death,
What afterwards, of mortal, should thy wish
Have tempted? When thou first hadst felt the dart
Of perishable things in my departing
For better realms, thy wing thou shouldst have plumed
To follow me; and never stoop'd again
To bide a second blow."

Dante.

ON the evening of the day on which Manuel had completed his mission to the dwelling of Sir Alfred De Lacy, Yusef Abu Amir was summoned from the side of his guest to receive the visit of a stranger; and in the hall lately occupied by Sir Alfred, found the young knight's sister, the fair Edith, attended by a page. She was enveloped in dark draperies, which, contrary to the Moorish custom, left only her face uncovered. On his entrance, she ad-

vanced to meet him, but the strangeness of his attire, the novel appearance of his dwelling, and above all the trembling solicitude she experienced for her brother, deprived her of the power to address him.

"Be not alarmed, fairest lady," said the courteous Moor, leading her to a couch; "the sons of Yemen know how to respect the daughter of the stranger. If it is to prefer a request, thou hast entered the dwelling of the Moslem, believe it (if in my power) already granted."

"My brother!" faltered Edith,—“I learn that he is beneath this roof,—may I not behold him?” She clasped her hands in the earnestness of her entreaty, and the loosened hood of her cloak falling back, revealed her sweet countenance, and the clustering curls of her luxuriant hair.

As Abu Amir's melancholy eyes dwelt in silent surprise on loveliness the dazzling fairness of which formed so striking a contrast to the dark-haired beauties of the south, she thought he

hesitated, and with beseeching earnestness continued : " We are orphans, and alone in this strange land,—since our childhood we have scarcely been separated. I beseech thee, O generous Moor, to conduct me to my brother !"

A few moments sufficed to grant her prayer, and as she sunk into the arms of De Lacy, the Moor who had led her to his chamber withdrew. Her first glance at those beloved features, convinced Edith that the object of her mission (which was to remove her brother immediately to Belem) was totally impracticable. " But I can remain beside thee, my beloved Alfred ;—nay, ask me not to leave thee,—am I not thy fittest nurse, and most congenial companion ?"

" Remember, my Edith, how I have already trespassed on the hospitality of this stranger."

" And also at thy extremest risk earned a claim on his lasting gratitude ! Do I not know all ?"

" Dearest Edith, this is no place for thee,—only consider the confinement of a sick chamber, and thy failing health !"

"But it needs not that I be constantly beside thee. That the Moor hath a daughter I have learned from thy messenger,—may I not spend with her the hours of thy repose, and only visit thee occasionally, to cheer the dulness of thy waking solitude?"

De Lacy started,—a flash of joy lit up his fine eyes for a moment, but despondency succeeded, and he sighed as he replied: "Alas! thou knowest not the domestic customs of this singular people!"

Still, however, Edith persisted in urging her plan, and when a slave shortly afterwards entered with refreshments, the lady desired him to request of Abu Amir, in her name, the favour of an interview.

As the Moor entered his daughter's bower with a step so noiseless that it disturbed not the brother and sister, who in silent thoughtfulness awaited his approach; he could not but be struck with the change that a few days had wrought in a mansion in which he had for years known only the dull monotony of a misanthropic existence.

There, in the mirador of his daughter—the very cushions that had pillowed her delicate frame subservient to his use,—lay one of that race which he had learned to abhor as the enemies of his faith and nation ; yet towards whom, in spite of early prejudices, his heart was drawn, not only by the most powerful ties of gratitude, but also by an esteem won by the youth's virtues and intelligence. Beside him sat the fair and fragile girl, who had ventured among a strange people for the sake of that beloved brother ; and as she bent over him, whose hand was clasped in hers, the pair appeared the very types of fraternal love. The Moor paused to consider whether such sweet and holy affections could belong to the stern and haughty Goth ; but remembering, that though of the same faith, they were of another nation from the foes of his race, he with a placable mind saluted his silent guests.

“ Behold my sister, O generous Moor,” cried De Lacy ;—“ she would fain remove me to her own bower, and take upon herself the completion of my cure !”

"Far be it from me to question the skill of so fair a sage," replied Abu Amir with a courteous smile, "yet permit me to offer the warning of my experience. The attempt to remove my guest would inevitably endanger that recovery which, having been retarded by his noble rescue of my child, is important to the peace of Abu Amir. If, therefore, our skill be not distrusted, let my guest delay his departure for a few more days,—nor suffer the thought that the hospitality of the Moor is exhausted, to disturb his peace."

"Nay, so far am I from doubting thy hospitality," replied De Lacy, "that if I cannot relieve thee of the burthen I already impose, the importunity of this maiden almost persuades me to add to my obligations."

He paused, and looked up to her; she felt that this was her opportunity, and timidly murmured: "The sister orphan would request not to be again deprived, in this strange land, of her only friend!"

It needed not another word to explain to Abu

Amir the request which both feared to shock his prejudices by making, and those very prejudices suggested the only plan which could render the sojourn of Edith beneath his roof no sacrifice on her part. "My friends!" he exclaimed, "is it so difficult for ye to remain together without removing from my dwelling? Thanks to Allah! and thy gallant brother, lady,—I have yet a daughter! She is indeed but of tender years; yet in her society thou mayest at least escape loneliness in the intervals between thy visits here. Behold the evening groweth dim, gentle lady; if my words meet with thy approval, permit the discreet Houadir to conduct thee at once to the apartments of Azayda."

Looks of delight were exchanged between the brother and sister, who were profuse in their acknowledgments to their considerate host. He slightly clapped his hands, and commanded the slave who answered to the summons, to request the immediate presence of Houadir.

Great was the surprise of the matron on beholding the fair English girl,—and it was increased immeasurably, when her master commanded her to conduct the lady to the bower of Azayda, and provide for her accommodation in his daughter's apartments.

Edith, overjoyed at having so easily obtained her boon, hastened to dismiss her page; and with a light heart followed the matron, who, as she led the way towards the room of her young mistress, occasionally raised her hands, as if scarcely able to deny utterance to her astonishment. The saloon into which, after threading innumerable passages, Edith was ushered, would have appeared to her of unequalled elegance, but for the exquisite adornments of the apartments she had just quitted. The whole of one side of it was open to a balcony lined with odorous plants, the roof being supported by slender pillars of white marble, whose capitals of Arabic design were gaily tinted and gilded. Embroidered ottomans of palest azure were

strewed upon the floor, and on a couch opposite the balcony reclined a fair girl in the first bloom of youth, and of exceeding beauty.

A small gazelle that nestled at her side started at the sight of the stranger, and bounding lightly over the intervening ottomans, disappeared behind a heavy drapery which concealed the further end of the apartment. The retreat of her favourite apprised Azayda of the entrance of Edith, and rising from her couch, she approached the stranger. Houadir's message was soon delivered: "Abu Amir recommended to his daughter's attentions the sister of Sir Alfred De Lacy."

As the matron left the room she turned her head, and beholding her young mistress salute with undisguised pleasure, and considerable reverence, the white hand of Edith, she raised her hands and eyes, and sagely murmured "No good *can* come of it; but what is, *is*; what must be, *must!*" Then convinced that she had spoken with oracular wisdom, the good dame hastened

to give the necessary orders for the accommodation of her new guest.

How transported was Azayda ! For the first time in her life she had a youthful companion, and one, so lovely, so affectionate, so amiable, that her simple and ingenuous heart gave her at once a sister's love. She failed not to observe in her noble features and azure eyes a resemblance to De Lacy, and beheld with astonishment the pure and transparent whiteness of her skin, and the showering ringlets of softest brown that shaded her fair throat and brow.

The heavy capote worn by Edith in conformity with the custom of the country, was now laid aside; and the fashion of her robes, so unlike the zephyr garments of Azayda, excited the child-like wonder of the latter; whilst the former, next to the exquisite loveliness of her young companion, was dazzled by the profusion of jewels, which not only adorned her raven locks and flowing robes, but glistened on every article that either for use or amusement was strewed around her.

Soon, however, each was too much absorbed in the other's gentle words to mark externals; and in the society of the young stranger, Azayda for the first time forgot that she was deprived of the lessons of Manuel.

Whilst with linked hands they conversed, as Azayda in compliance with the request of Edith described her late peril, and the gallant rescue,—the toll of the angelus bell solemnly sounding from the distant convent warned every listener that the day was done. The voice of Azayda ceased, and Edith kneeling, buried her face in her hands;—but great was her surprise on arising after the brief devotion, to find that the young Mooress had accompanied her.

From that moment the great secret that had pressed heavily on the heart of Azayda was revealed;—her stolen instructions—her recently received, but fervent faith,—became known to Edith; and when the young convert mourned the loss of her instructor, she received with gladness the offer of her new acquaintance, to supply as far as might be his place.

And now Azayda's hours flew by more cheerily, —her young instructress added to the teachings of her former preceptor, descriptions of the manners, customs, and institutions established by Christianity. To her woman's heart the social position of the women of Christendom was a theme which never wearied ; she listened with delight to Edith's description of that gallant and generous chivalry, which ever beheld in the gentler sex the representatives of the sweet mother of the world's Redeemer.

It was inevitable that from such a topic must sometimes arise narrations bearing a reference to the life-long devotion and constancy that constitutes the felicity of wedded hearts ; and Edith failed not to contrast the dignity and excellence of marriage, which renders a wife the companion and friend of her lord, with the degrading servitude that, whether regarded as a toy, or as a slave, is (with rare exceptions) woman's lot, out of the pale of Christianity. And sometimes the history of a pure and unselfish affection that

with fervent truth overcame every trial, and survived even death itself, would enliven their discourse; and as Azayda listened, her young heart recognised in such noble natures, a strength of which itself was not incapable. But ever, whilst their narratives rendered her expressive countenance radiant with triumph, she remarked that that of Edith faded, and her sweet lips would quiver as the words escaped them on which the listener hung with so new a delight. It was on such an occasion that Azayda one day suddenly exclaimed :—" Ah my sweet friend, methinks in thine island home some warrior sighs for the return of his fair-haired Edith !—Say, is't not so ?"

Edith attempted a reply, but the words died on her lips ; averting her face, she strove to conceal the tears that slowly gushed from her downcast eyes. " Alas ! I have given thee pain !" sighed Azayda, throwing herself on her knees beside her friend. " What shall I do to stay those tears ?"

"They are already stayed, sweet one," replied Edith, striving for composure; "'twas but a momentary weakness.—But thou shalt not misunderstand thy friend, though in pity to this frail frame my recital must be short." Azayda, though far from deficient in curiosity, besought the agitated girl to spare herself the task; but having recovered somewhat her accustomed composure, Edith replied:—"I had supposed myself past this weakness. But it must be battled with, not avoided; for I am anxious to acquire that calm resignation that can look back on, or speak of the past, with unsuffering patience. To unfold to thee therefore the one great sorrow of my life, will be a salutary exercise of my fortitude.

"Know then, such a love as that I have described to thee, subsisted between myself and a gallant youth the friend of my brother, and playfellow of our childhood. Our troth, plighted ere we dreamed of the sacredness of the engagement, was in after years confirmed, and became the bright hope of our existence. But

Edmund deemed himself unworthy of me, until he had signalized himself among his compeers ; —already had he acquired no small fame in the tourney, but his lofty spirit panted for the more real but dangerous glory of the battle. Alas ! that one so gentle should have been dazzled by the false glare of a warrior's fame !

“ Though I sighed at the thought of our separation, I freely consented to the sacrifice, which he declared his honour required ;—I dreaded not the result, for proud of his prowess, I dreamed but of his return crowned with glory, a victorious hero ! How well can I recall the mingled feelings of pride and regret with which I buckled on his armour, and girded around him a scarf I had embroidered, as a memento of her whose prayers were to shield him from danger. Alas for my presumption ; I beheld no more my beautiful, my idolized ! He accompanied a chosen band of adventurous youth who volunteered an expedition into Spain, and gallantly did his devoir where danger was rifest ; but what was to me

the cruel fame that lauded his achievements ? they robbed me of the true heart on which mine leaned, and left me little else than a tottering and blighted ruin ! Ah, were I capable of describing the shock that the news—so dreadful, so unthought-of ! inflicted on thy Edith, 'twould be cruelty to thee to attempt it. But for Alfred I had sunk under the fearful blow ;—his tenderness, his watchful love, bore me through the storm, and when comparative calm, left little remaining of the struggle but the languor of this o'er-tasked frame, he brought me hither, trusting that the winter of Portugal would spare my shaken constitution, and give it time to rally. I hoped also to be allowed to visit that grave in Castile of which they told me ; but on our arrival in Portugal, the information we obtained of the unsettled state of that unhappy land, induced me to give up the project. Alfred therefore hired a guide, and paid the melancholy visit which his affection for Edmund required of him, whilst I awaited his return in close seclusion at Belem. And

nobly has my glorious brother since his return devoted himself to the self-imposed task, of cheering my broken spirits. Thou wilt not then wonder that the mysterious absence of one so deservedly dear was insupportable to me ; that my native timidity should give way to my desire to be satisfied by ocular proof of the exact situation of Alfred, and that I now earnestly endeavour to repair in some sort his fond affection, by watching beside his couch of pain."

Azayda's tears had accompanied the recital of her friend ; but though extremely pale, Edith wept no more, and when Azayda observed, that to herself *she* still was an object of envy, since a brother's love at least remained to her, she calmly replied : " Though deservedly and beyond measure dear, think not that I can count on Alfred in my future views ;—no, my gentle friend, he will one day select some happy maid, and love as my Edmund loved, nor would I wish it otherwise. For me, the world henceforth hath no charm,—my sole desire is to regain my

health, and in some house of peace devote my remaining days to works of devotion and charity. Perchance I may ere long (as many a happy anchorite hath done,) bless the chastising hand, that by a blow, once thought severe, weaned me from a vain and delusive world!"

The inquiries induced by this allusion to the religious orders, drew Edith from the painful subject of her slain lover; with ready zeal she met the eager curiosity of Azayda, and described with faithful exactness the homes of humble piety and never-ceasing charity. She had been educated in a community of nuns, and entertained for the pure sisterhood the warmest affection and deepest reverence. The recollection of the happy days she spent under their care restored her cheerfulness; for ever some bright reminiscence, or merry anecdote decked her face with smiles. Azayda's ideas therefore of a convent, pictured a home of tranquil happiness,—far unlike those, who colouring their fancies with the hues of a dark and suspicious fanaticism, paint those peaceful dwellings as the abodes of misery and gloom.

Thus, in the occupation so delightful to a young and inquiring mind—the acquisition of various kinds of knowledge—did Azayda's happy days glide rapidly away, and at each brief visit paid by Abu Amir to his daughter (which from a motive of delicacy was always during Edith's attendance on her brother), he noted that her countenance was rapidly acquiring an expression of intelligence and vivacity; and as the faculties of her mind were daily more awakened, the watchful father marked with a suppressed sigh her growing resemblance to her mother.

And now the regained strength of De Lacy admonished him of duties long neglected;—the impatient weariness which had rendered his former detention so irksome, assailed him not; but he yearned to prostrate himself before the altar to which he had so long been a stranger. The day of his departure was fixed, and his people summoned from Belem to attend him and his sister thither.

It was Azayda's first grief, the parting with her

beloved companion. To Edith was deputed the task of conveying to her the adieus of De Lacy, (who might not request a parting interview); and if Azayda sighed as she contrasted the cold custom of her race with the more fearless intercourse of Christians, the trepidation with which she received his parting words, even from the lips of his sister, reconciled her to the arrangement; for she felt that she was incapable of the firm equanimity that a more liberal training might have given her mind. With a prolonged embrace the fair friends parted, and in the vestibule of the mansion Edith found with her brother, their courteous host surrounded by all his slaves.

The formal but heartfelt adieus had been said, when De Lacy remembered that he had left his office-book in his chamber. Opposing the intentions of Abu Amir, who would have dismissed a slave for the manuscript, the knight with the vivacity of youth and returned health bounded through the lengthened passages and up the

narrow stair. What was his surprise on re-entering the apartment he had so long occupied, to find the missing volume in the hand of Azayda ! The young girl stood contemplating the closed book which she held in one small hand, the other resting the while on the silver table whereon stood her mirror.

On its polished surface De Lacy saw reflected her beautiful countenance, with its clearly traced brows, and long dark lashes drooping over the pure pale cheek ; for one dangerous moment he silently marked its exquisite symmetry and mild intelligence. As he yet stood irresolute, a deep sigh escaped Azayda, and depositing the book on the table she turned from it, murmuring, "I shall never see him more !" That altered position revealed to her the English knight, and confused and agitated she hastily veiled her face.

"Forgive me, fairest lady," exclaimed De Lacy, approaching her more nearly, though as fearless of alarming the timid beauty as he would

have been of scaring the wild gazelle,—“forgive this seeming intrusion,—my forgotten book must be my apology. Yet believe me, I cannot but bless the happy chance that enables me personally to breathe my adieus. Farewell, sweet maiden ! may I hope that sometimes, in the innocent seclusion of thy bower, thou wilt remember De Lacy ?”

“Ah, sir knight,” she murmured, in low and tremulous tones, “could I forget the preserver of my life, I were indeed ungrateful !”

The youth did not dare to make his adieu after the manner of his country by touching her hand, but with a low obeisance was departing, when Azayda extended to him the office-book, observing : “Behold the treasure thou didst return to seek !”

“It is a hallowed thing in my eyes, since touched by that fair hand,”—replied De Lacy, “yet might I venture to request the gentle Azayda’s acceptance of such a trifle, it would be

happiness to me to know that she possesses a memorial of him to whom she will ever be as a dream of heaven."

"Thanks, courteous knight! a thousand thanks!" cried Azayda, joyfully; "it is indeed a treasure, and never will I open it without breathing a prayer for the giver."

De Lacy, little suspecting the cause of Azayda's joy at possessing the offices of the Christian church, once more made a profound obeisance, and with a look of lingering regret at the young and graceful creature, whom he might never again behold, departed.

"Thou art pale, my brother," observed Edith, as he assisted her to her palfrey. He made no reply, but repeating his acknowledgments and adieus to Abu Amir, sprung on his beloved steed, and departed from the dwelling of the Moor.

Often as they slowly rode through the valley did Sir Alfred cast a wistful glance towards the

few small windows which appeared in the dull white walls of the Moorish quinta; but he found not what he sought, and at a gentle pace the party returned to Belem.

CHAPTER IV.

"The middle ages were the ages of crime, and in that respect form no singular epoch in the world's history ;—but mark, it was crime along with infinite piety, infinite horror of sin, and infinite desire of justice ; and on this side what parallel to them can we find in human annals ? Amidst social disorders, what multitudes were obeying the call to perfection, and at the voice of the preacher to follow Christ !"

Digby.

In the circumscribed and wretched lugar wherein we shared the secret councils of the Gitani, there was, on the evening of that day whihc witnessed De Lacy's return to Belem, unusual bustle and excitement.

The wide doors of the small church were as usual open, but within (contrary to its wont) was now assembled an uncouth and motley multitude. There, now were seen, as if urged unwillingly by some powerful spell, many by

whom the calm and holy atmosphere of the sacred place had been long unbreathed. There might be seen stern and unbending features,—callous, harsh, or cruel,—hardened by crime, or rendered coarse and gross by a life of unchecked sensuality. Many stood patiently expectant, half hoping, half fearing,—as holy confidence, or consciousness of guilt influenced their souls. But a greater number came with no better motive than curiosity,—compliance with the urgent entreaty of some friend, or perhaps to spend in a novel way an idle hour. Here and there might perchance be detected on some few faces, the ghastly sneer of a mocking spirit,—but these were few, for he was indeed lost, who, in an age when every mind was sedulously taught in early life to serve its Maker, could entirely throw off the memory of those blessed influences of his happiest days, or entirely forget the habitual reverence inspired by the consecrated temple of the Eternal.

It was moreover remarkable in that gathering

of discordant and unhappy spirits, that, contrary to the usual custom, when each person on entering a church immediately knelt in such particular spot as best suited his mood, and became absorbed in meditation or prayer,—all now stood in a dense crowd around the small reading-desk, which had been raised considerably above the people, on one side of the nave. It was an approach towards that somewhat modern accommodation—the pulpit ; the rood-loft having formed in the early ages of Christianity, the spot whence the lecture, gospels, and lessons of the day were usually read. Whilst the primitive fervour remained, the constant exhortations of the confessional, capable of being made so truly applicable to the wants and infirmities of each individual, rendered public lectures on morality less essential. It was ever a mark of the decline of piety, when angelic teachers found it necessary to reprove, exhort, and arouse multitudes, by public teaching.

For such a purpose was now assembled the lawless populace of that depraved lugar, at which had arrived within the last few days two venerable brothers of the order of Friar-preachers; and it was their urgent invitation carried by themselves from house to house, that now filled the neglected church.

Among the multitude there assembled, stood one whose face and form were entirely enveloped in a dark capote, and who in a shaded corner of the sacred building appeared to shun observation. Near the bottom of the nave, where the crowd grew thinner, appeared among the upturned faces, a countenance which was cast in the mould of honest simplicity, though scathed by crime and misery; and in his marked features and sturdy figure it is easy to recognise the Gitani's accomplice, Stephano. Beside him stood his patient, faithful, and now hoping wife; her eyes at times glancing with a timid, stealthy look towards her husband, whilst her pale lips moved without ceasing, as if she feared to lose a mo-

ment in imploring Heaven's grace for his conversion.

At length the good friar, having knelt for a few minutes before the altar, ascended the small pulpit; and attracted by his meek and holy looks, the auditors drew yet closer around it.

Oh what a contrast did every upturned face of those wretched slaves of sin—whether haggard, bloated, or sternly proud—present to the meek and holy peace which illumined every lineament in the mortified countenance of the happy servant of God !

He was clad in the dark coarse flowing robes of his order, which were girt around his waist by a cord; his uncovered head was shaven on the crown, and his feet were bare. Pale were his cheeks, homely were his features, and his deep-set eyes were calmly mild. Peace—such peace as the world dreams not of,—shone in every look and gesture, and was imparted by his persuasive words. He opened the sacred manuscript, bound in rude boards, and secured by iron clasps, and read a

sentence uttered long before by the Giver of Life, through the lips of his prophet, denouncing the doom of the impenitent: "Because I called and ye would not hear, I stretched out my hand and ye would not come to me, therefore will I mock at your destruction, and laugh when that which you fear shall come upon you!"

As the good friar dwelt on the text he had chosen, his expressions were simple and adapted to the capacities of those who listened; and when he portrayed the present wretchedness, the future misery, that must be the consequence of their unprofitable lives, he meekly identified himself with those he addressed. An earnest love that strove to win, hallowed and enforced his exhortations, and melted many a stubborn heart that would have been callous to harsher reasonings. His eloquence was simple and unpretending, but all unearthly; every loving word came as a soothing melody, hushing the troubled soul, and appearing to emanate from that to which it invited all,—celestial and never-dying peace!

And having thus subdued and softened those harsh spirits, calmed their warring passions, and, as if by syren-like sounds charmed away the ruggedness of their natures ; having won by his gentle and persuasive words a mastery over their souls, he used his influence with a magician's power, swaying at his will their excited feelings, and only anxious to render permanent a change, which might be distinctly read in the upturned faces around him.

Then came the full tide of his overpowering eloquence, breaking down every barrier of pride and self-will, humbling to the dust each sin-defiled soul ; bruising,—but to heal ! What wonder, that when tears flowed unrestrained down his own pale cheeks, many a head among the crowd was bowed, and sobs of anguish burst from many a bosom, that had long been steeled by crime ?

The magnitude—the wilfulness—the misery of sin—appeared for the first time brought home to those softened hearts, and the preacher

seized the moment when compunction bowed each spirit prostrate before the offended Deity, to whisper the sweet consolation held out to penitents. Thus hope came to raise the contrite heart, and faith pointed to the mystery of love which was represented in rude but expressive sculpture over the rood-loft,—and divine charity seemed to speak from the agonised countenance that invited all to the redemption purchased on Mount Calvary.

And thus directing them to meditate on that exhaustless subject,—that ever-preaching sermon,—the Passion of the Redeemer; the friar's exhortation closed : and the multitude kneeling, received his parting benediction.

Many shortly afterwards left the spot, but numbers remained to meditate and to pray; and not a few collected around the confessionals where the brethren had now taken their seats, for the further service of such souls as had been aroused to a consciousness of the danger of their sinful state.

He of the dark cloak lingered among the rest, rather, however, as a spectator than a sharer in the scene; for aloof from the penitents, he leaned against a pillar as if desirous of beholding without being observed.

And some distance from him, but yet farther from his fellows, a figure knelt, half prostrate on the ground, his forehead resting on the marble floor. So silent, so motionless did he appear, that he might have been lifeless, or at least slumbering, save that at intervals his frame was shaken by a heavy but suppressed sigh. Long did he thus remain,—till when the last penitent quitted the confessional nearest to him, he arose, leaving the stones where his brow had rested wet with compunctive tears. He entered the tribunal,—and as he passed beneath the lamp that burned near it, revealed the features of Stephano.

Meanwhile his wife, who by his desire had left him there, had regained their close and wretched dwelling; and having arranged on their board such frugal fare as their means afforded,

sat down with a hoping and grateful heart to await her husband's return.

Long she remained alone ; expectant, but calm ; no gnawing fears now haunted her mind ; her heart was busy devising schemes for the future, built on the blessed hope that she should at length succeed in drawing her husband from the influence of his vile associates ; and for once she did not grieve that the light was fast departing, and yet he came not. On a sudden a slight tap on the door startled her from her hopeful reveries, and on obeying the summons, she beheld to her great discomfort, the dreaded Gitano, Gheran.

"Is thy husband at home?" he asked with his usual grin.

"No, señor."

"Well, since 'tis some time past sunset, he will doubtless be here anon,—I will await his return."

"Alas ! I know not when he will be here ;" replied the woman, almost weeping, for she

dreaded lest the influence of his wild associates should break those resolves that she knew were forming in the mind of Stephano.

Gheran heeded not her words, but stalking into the little hovel, deliberately helped himself to what pleased him on the spread board; and the housewife with dismay beheld one-half of their slight repast disappear down the capacious throat of the Gitano.

“’Tis homely fare, good Isora,” he exclaimed, when his hunger was appeased; “but for one wearied and fainting it may suffice till better can be found. Ah! shouldst thou ever chance to claim our hospitality in the wilderness, thou shalt find some luscious Val-de-peña to wash away the flavour of viands that would be welcome on a prince’s board.”

“Good angels defend me from such wages of iniquity!” thought Isora, but without venturing to utter her thoughts; and her heart bounded with joy when a well-known step approached the threshold. She sprung to the door, and had

just time to press his hand, and warn Stephano with an imploring and tearful glance, when Gheran pushed rudely by her. The husband returned the pressure, but avoiding her as she attempted to address him, accosted Gheran with his customary abrupt inquiry,—“ Well ?”

“ Thou must with me instantly,—they wait for us.”

“ Ha !—is it even so ?—lead on then.”

Gheran started into the street, and Stephano disengaging himself from his weeping wife, who, unable to speak, clung to his arm ; whispered,—“ Detain me not, Isora, and fear nothing.” The next instant he had followed the rapid strides of the Gitano, and the unhappy wife once more wept alone in her desolate dwelling.

The steps of the two men were directed towards the squalid estaglem to both well known ; and in the same low dingy room wherein they held their former conference, they found, apparently awaiting them, Hamet, and the hideous Cloton. The latter,—not now in moody thoughts

absorbed,—restless and excited; his fierce eyes flashing with impatience, and his ghastly noseless countenance revealed in all its deformity.

Stephano with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of surprise and horror, when, on entering the room, he was confronted by that swart and distorted visage, whose smile of welcome displayed the whole range of his discoloured and fang-like teeth. A draught of the Val-de-peña, however, not less delicious because contraband, assisted him to conceal his feelings, and Hamet was not long in giving another direction to his thoughts.

“It is as we expected, Stephano,—the Islander is returned to Belem ;—I knew there would have been something heard of it if he had died of his wounds. Behold, this very morning Gheran saw him alight from his horse at the portal of his dwelling, with all his attendants about him, and apparently in perfect health ! Since then, our good brother hath lost no time in warning us all that our reward is in jeopardy ; and we have met

here to consult how we may prevent his thwarting the plans of him we serve. They are now well nigh ripe—aye, Cloton?”

“Well, well,” replied the savage, sternly,—“of *them* we are not here to speak.”

“What scheme is well-nigh ripe?” asked Stephano, eagerly.

“Oh, certain matters not for thine ear,” replied Hamet; “our need of thee relates only to the securing of this brawling Englishman;—that business to which I alluded, is not in thy line.”

“Then tell me at once for what thou hast summoned me hither;—my evening meal awaits me.”

“’Tis simple enough, an’ thou wilt listen with patience. Do we not tell thee the Northman hath returned to vex again the noble who so handsomely requites our services; and that his undesired presence deprives us of our full award? We must devise means to conceal this popinjay till the time be past, during which we contracted for his absence.”

"Aye, aye, I know well *where* thou wouldst hide;—but I have told thee before I will have no hand in the shedding of blood."

"Why, who but thyself spoke of shedding blood? Is it not sufficient for our purpose that he be conveniently absent for awhile?"

"So thou saidst before,—at the utmost he was only to be slightly wounded; yet when felled to the earth, this laughing devil must fain smite him with his crooked blade." As Stephano spoke there was a mantling of blood on his brow and cheeks, and a fiery gleam in his deep-set eyes that betokened no disposition to be trifled with.

"Well," replied Gheran, bearing as usual his perpetual grin, "thou knowest the approach of footsteps hindered our making sure of our prize, and *that* appeared the only way of preventing his speedy return where he was not wanted." Stephano made no reply, for Hamet returned. "Thou seest the wound was, after all, no great matter, since he is now sound again; but we, un-

willing to forfeit our well-earned reward, are determined to keep him away as we promised. Therefore, an'thou wilt undertake to avert from us the distrust of our patron, by cajoling this youth into our cave on the coast, or surprising him on the mountain, or in any other way thy wit may devise, keeping him a prisoner for a week or two, until we give thee notice to liberate him;—we will leave this affair to thine own guidance. We shall have enough,—by the blessed day! to occupy us fully.”

“Such be the terms, then,” replied Stephano; “but how long am I to detain the knight?”

“We will tell thee, fear not!”

“Until the lady is safely wedded to this unknown lord, perchance,” replied Stephano,—“that is, I guess, your next service.—Well, I am glad you ask me not to aid in it,—for though he be, as you tell me, a grand noble, and possessing vast wealth,—yet I can well imagine him an unacceptable mate for gentle dame. But 'tis nought to me. Well do I know that it is boot-

less for us to reason with those whose bidding we are fain to obey. Leave this business to mine own guidance, and I doubt not ere to-morrow's sun to have this knight in safe durance.—But by doing so, shall I obtain my hundred moidores which are yet unpaid?"

"Yes, yes, of them thou may'st be sure;—only secure the Englisher and thy hire is certain,—'tis his liberty perils all."

"And does Cloton take part in thy further plans?"

"Do I?" replied the deformed, fiercely,—then turning on Hamet a look of deep meaning, he growled, "He has thwarted *my* long-nursed and cherished scheme,—now let him beware lest I cross him."

"Well, well, Cloton, no more now," replied Hamet, with a cautious look, which warned Stephano that they had business on hand in which he was to be no sharer. Rising, therefore, he left the place, and the Gitani drawing closely together, discussed secret schemes, and cunning designs of which more anon.

Whilst they thus held dark consultation, Stephano with hasty strides held on his way ; not however towards his dwelling. Threading several narrow alleys, rank with unwholesome odours, he at length reached the now deserted church. He tried the door ; it was fast ; and turning his steps towards the small hospice that stood near, a few words whispered to the porter obtained him instant admission. Shortly afterwards he issued forth accompanied by a figure totally enveloped in a wide robe. Together they trod the winding street, and were soon lost in the shadows of the angular buildings, which were now deepened by the shades of evening.

It was at the same hour, that De Lacy and his sister sat in their temporary home, but in far different moods ; she all joy at finding her beloved brother now entirely restored to her, he thoughtful and dispirited.

Perceiving his disinclination to talk, which however did not prevent his being an admirable listener, Edith indulged in unwonted hilarity,

and in sprightly accents discoursed on all that had passed of late, and much that she anticipated for the future. Of the latter topics, the chief was their approaching return to their native land; the former consisted of the sojourn she had made at the quinta of the Moor, and in particular of the sweetness, innocence, and beauty of the young Azayda. She narrated many scenes that had occurred during their brief intercourse, all tending to display some fair quality of her young friend's ingenuous mind, or her most tender and affectionate heart; and concluded with asking,—“Is she not beautiful? Thou didst behold her, I know, when thy gallantry so nobly rescued her. With what a pretty confusion did she describe the interview! Answer me!—is she not lovely?”

“Yes!”

“Well! Can it be possible that so professed an admirer of female beauty as my brother, can find no further reply to such a question than a simple affirmative! But I suppose,” she added,

archly, "the stately charms of Donna Inez have rendered thee insensible to aught less than the dignity of a queen, or fabled goddess!"

De Lacy made no reply to this lively sally, unless a slight sigh be deemed such; and approaching the window, appeared most earnest in scrutinizing the depths of the clear blue sky, whence a few stars were essaying to peep forth on things terrene.

Edith followed him, and standing silent for a few moments, at length whispered, "Heed not my raillery, dearest brother; surely thou knowest I would not pain thee."

"Sweet Edith!" he answered, "methinks it is I owe thee apology, for suffering this abstracted mood to obtain such mastery over me. Forgive me, dearest, and assign my penance."

"Well, it shall be light,—thou mayest e'en read to me one of those Italian sonnets that thy friend Geoffrey gave thee ere we left England." The lady handed her brother a manuscript,—it was a volume of Petrarch's poems, then novel-

ties in literature, and De Lacy listlessly turned over the leaves as if selecting some favourite page.

Edith meanwhile regarded him with earnestness ; and remarking how much of dignity his thoughtful mood imparted to his fine features, forbore to disturb a reverie, into which, forgetful of his penance, he had again fallen.

Long they sat silent, wrapped in far different thoughts ; when the meditations of both were interrupted by the entrance of a page, who announced that a venerable friar wished to speak with Sir Alfred. In obedience to the knight's order, the religious in a few moments entered the room, closely followed by Stephano. De Lacy met the father at the door, and with respectful attention conducted him to a seat, behind which Stephano took his stand. But the friar gently drew him from thence, at the same time signifying to De Lacy that he had merely accompanied one who had something important to communicate. With some diffi-

culty Stephano commenced his tale by disclosing the first weakness that had made him a confidant of the Giatni in one of their most important contraband transactions ; which being detected, had compelled him to fly his native village. He did not conceal that the miserable destitution which was the consequence of that unhappy step, had made him frequently a partaker in their lawless acts, and acknowledged himself one of those who had lately attacked De Lacy. He reminded the knight of his efforts to disarm him ; declaring that nothing could be further from his intention than to do him any serious injury, To the inhuman blow which had been inflicted after Sir Alfred's fall, he attributed that his eyes were at last opened to the villany of his associates ; and when in compliance with the entreaties of his wife, he listened to the lecture of the holy friar, he firmly resolved to sin no more. " Struck with horror," he continued, "on perceiving for the first time the greatness of my crimes, I ventured to approach the

confessional, where my spiritual director exhorted me to endeavour to ascertain what was the crime to which the securing of the English knight was evidently but a step; and prevent it if possible. To this end he advised my not shunning the Gitani, which would deprive me of all chance of learning their movements. Ere proceeding further, however, I must obtain from all here present, a promise of secrecy; for though I am willing to prevent if possible the intended crime, I cannot consent, nor doth the good father require me, to betray those who trust me." The required promises were readily given, and De Lacy and his sister now learned the design to re-capture the former, with which Stephano had been entrusted. To the knight's earnest inquiries as to who was the powerful enemy that threatened his freedom, Stephano could give no reply; and was equally at a loss respecting the lady whose fate was so deeply implicated in his.

The friar now addressed De Lacy, proposing that he should secrete himself in the hospice, and

be given out as missing from his dwelling, in order that the conspirators might believe him safe in the custody of Stephano. He also advised that the latter should meantime keep diligent watch on the movements of his associates ; and though he, for motives which the good friar chose not to overrule, refused to place them in the power of the law, he would perhaps enable the knight to achieve the rescue of the unknown lady. The plan was reconsidered, and no better means appearing of preventing some cruel wrong, De Lacy cheerfully undertook his part, and Edith was fain to lose once more her beloved companion. It was finally decided, by the suggestion of Stephano, that on the morrow notice should be sent to the desembargador of Belem, requesting aid to discover the missing knight ; in order that the rumour of his absence might reach the ears of the Gitani, whom Stephano suggested would be on the listen for such a consequence of his disappearance.

So well was the negotiation managed, that

an hour after Stephano and the friar emerged from the hospice, they re-entered it accompanied by another, who like them was concealed effectually in a wide capote.

CHAPTER V.

" I'll tell thee truth, He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of pride : his pale eyes ran
With tears, which each some falsehood told ;
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek.
He was a ceward to the strong ;
He was a tyrant to the weak."

SHELLEY.

THE court had long since returned to the palace within the precincts of which Don Sebastian died. The formal gardens, that extending for many a broad acre bloomed around the irregular yet stately edifice, were now no longer deserted, as in the winter months ; and Donna Inez, when traversing their pleached walks,—whether accompanying her favourite companions, or in more formal guise attending her royal mistress,—

often recalled the sad hours which she had spent therein during the last days of her unforgotten sire.

Sometimes those flowery arbours and breezy groves resounded to the songs of minstrels, when on occasion of some regal festival the gay and noble flocked to the courtly revel; but more frequently a few selected friends alone shared the loved society of the queen, whose quiet though cheerful spirit joyed not in noise and revelry.

On one of the calm evenings, the refreshing coolness of which amply repay the native of the south for the oppressive heat of noon; the queen and the fair image of herself, who was ever beside her, walked slowly beneath the towering chesnuts which shaded a verdant terrace, while at some two hundred paces behind them appeared their noble attendants.

The royal ladies were deeply engaged in conversation, and once or twice the eyes of Donna Maria, as she raised them towards her mother,

swam in tears. It was at such a moment that the queen said, with a tone in which an attempt at reproach strove to conceal deeper feelings : " Forget not at least thy station, my child, nor shame me by expending in weak repinings the energies that may be needed to strengthen just resolves."

" Sweet mother !" replied the princess, " thy guidance hath ever been my rule,—wilt thou not grant it now ?"

" 'Tis impossible, unless I could read thy heart ; and that task, hitherto so easy, hath become one of doubt and difficulty."

" Ah, why should it be so ? I am conscious of no disguise."

" I believe thee, my beloved child ! but as a mistake now were irremediable, let us not be hasty to decide. I will prefer to the king thy prayer, that the proposed negotiations be deferred, and we will meantime commend our fears and wishes to heaven. Thou art indeed full young to quit my side, sweet one !—but I dread

lest in giving way to thy entreaty, some selfishness should sway my judgment ; for alas ! it will indeed be a sad hour that tears thee from me—perhaps for ever !”

As the queen ceased to speak, she led the way from the gardens, and intimating her wish by a sign, one favourite attendant alone followed the royal ladies to the palace.

Among those who remained behind were Inez, Clara, and Isabel. The former had regained the rounded symmetry of her slender figure, and her cheeks wore again the delicate tinge of health ; but in her dark eyes a shade of melancholy thought rested,—a soft and holy trace of sorrows past, or disappointment wrestled with, though not forgotten. It was as though her gentle and generous heart yet dwelt on the remembrance of a dream from which it had been roughly roused ; and languishing still after a shadow that had lost its illusive and imaginary brightness, had not yet ceased its aching.

Busied in the calm fulfilment of her daily

duties, Inez knew nothing of the sickly sensibility that turns from sunshine because one sweet hope is shaded ; though at times, even now, she started and trembled, when some low tones murmured among the throngs around her, recalled the memory of that sweet voice to which she had attached a soul, thoughtful, tender, impassioned. And when, as she wandered amidst the flowery arbours of the royal gardens, the breeze rushing through the closely woven foliage, mimicked a bursting sigh, she remembered the complaint which had represented one hovering ever unseen beside her.

True it is, however, that she never identified De Lacy with these dreams ;—for though ever bearing willing testimony to his bravery, wit, and manly beauty, she rather chose to destroy her imaginary idol than clothe it in the lineaments of the gay Briton.

By gradual degrees the three friends separated themselves from their companions, and holding gentle converse, glided through the embowered

walks ; but whether the matter of their discourse concerned the fashion of a wimple, the merit of a falcon, or the rival feats of adventurous knights, we have not time to learn ; for the lithe and agile figure of a page was seen gliding, darting, running amidst the overhanging bowers, and across the devious walks, asking all he met for the lady Inez. Haste was written on his flushed brow, and in his hand he grasped a small scroll bound round with a skein of silk.

“ Who, or what wantest thou, stripling ? ” suddenly exclaimed a harsh, stern voice. The youth paused, and beheld the dreaded favourite, the Cemeiro Môr.

“ I seek my mistress, señor, the lady Inez ; —of thy charity say which of these labarynthine walks she has taken.”

“ Willingly,” replied the count ; “ an’ thou art bound on her service hie thee quickly ; she hath just entered with two other ladies, yon terrace belted by flowering myrtles.” The page making a low obeisance, bounded in the

direction indicated, and Caelho shortly afterwards disappeared.

Right glad was the merry page to cease his tedious quest, and place the troublesome missive entrusted to him in the fair hands of Donna Inez. The lady perused it with a troubled countenance, and as she slowly closed it, murmured, "Heaven's will be done!"

Donna Isabel drew close beside her, and softly said,—“Ah, dearest friend! what does that same sad scroll betide? I pray heaven no disaster!”

“Not to me, fair Isabel,—mine is not a selfish sadness. The kind matron who was my sole friend when I first abode in yon crowded city, Donna Maria de la Zibriera, is, alas! at the point of death!” The gentle girl turned aside to hide her tears; nor was the sympathy of her friends withheld; to whom the good lady and her son were, by the friendship of Donna Inez, well known. Brief was the pause that ensued ere Inez addressed the page. “Speed instantly

to my room, Hernandez,—bid Sanchiza order my litter, and hold thyself in readiness to attend me to the city.”

The page departed, and Inez as she followed his steps again addressed her friends. “The note I have just received is from the hand of a friend of Donna Maria’s, who assures me that the good matron, who cannot survive the night, earnestly implores to see me before she dies. Nothing therefore remains for me but to hasten as quickly as possible to Lisbon, for I need not tell you that I would not for a king’s ransom, disappoint the dying wish of that generous and kindly soul.”

As they hurried along, they passed a clepsydra or water-clock, of which there were several in such parts of the garden as, in consequence of being almost always shaded, could not be furnished with a dial. Inez paused to regard it. “It is but four hours since noon,” she observed; “I shall have ample time to return ere the angelus.” The ladies made no reply, but troubled

and anxious, though scarcely knowing wherefore, continued to follow the quickly gliding footsteps of their fair friend.

At the base of the winding stairs that led from the gardens to the apartments of Donna Inez, which were the same that she had occupied with her father, though far from those of the other attendants on the queen,—Inez having preferred them for the sake of the memories they awakened,—they found the young page, and two men with a litter. Sanchiza also, enveloped in her capote, stood ready, with one for her lady on her arm. “I shall not require thy service, my good Sanchiza; since the time at my command is so short, Hernandez will best attend me.” And as she delivered her mild command, Inez folded the ample cloak around her.

Sanchiza, with the freedom of a favourite domestic, ventured to demur at the decision; representing herself as the more fitting attendant, and looking on the childlike features of the

youthful page, even ventured to exclaim, "What can that boy avail thee, sweet lady?"

"He will suffice," replied Inez. "We are not in a wilderness. There is nothing here to fear!"

But the stripling haughtily observed: "There will be little chance of my ever winning golden spurs, señora, if the services of a tiring woman are to be measured with those of an aspirant for the honours of chivalry."

"Well, my gallant boy," replied Inez, smiling at his assumption of the airs of manhood,—
"thou shalt begin betimes to earn thy desired guerdon; I willingly accept thy escort."

"And though light the task," added Isabel, "deem it not trifling, fair youth,—for many a belted knight, of long fame in arms, would hold it a high privilege to watch but for one hour over the safety of thy noble mistress."

The dark eyes of Hernandez de la Sosia flashed with proud triumph as he conducted Donna Inez to the litter, who remarking with a smile

his exultation, whispered, as she took her seat therein,—“I wish thee more arduous and honourable task, good youth, than the safe conduct of peaceful maiden, on peaceful mission, and in peaceful hour.”

“More arduous I might obtain, señora,” replied the page, lowly bowing ere he closed the door, “but more honourable never!”

The lady once more smiled:—“Thou wilt make ere long a most apt courtier, Hernandez.”

“Say, a gallant knight, señora; methinks such words from thy lips would be an earnest of success.”

“Nay, close the door, and let's begone, thou tercel; it boots not now to parley longer here.—Adieu, dear Isabel; adieu, sweet Clara; Sanchiza, I return ere the angelus bell.”—And with these words the fair Donna Inez was borne away.

As the bearers briskly departed with their precious burthen, Donna Clara was struck with their stern and uncouth features; so unlike, (though clad to resemble) the stout and merry

Gallegos who usually performed such offices. She watched them as they passed through the low portal leading from the court-yard of the palace, and turning to Sanchiza, exclaimed : "Thy lady's bearers look like unblest spirits ; I wonder for what good quality she selected them !"

"Oh, these are not Jacopo and Geraldin, señora. When Hernandez sought them in such haste this evening, the one was ill, the other not to be found ; and we were fain to secure these strangers, since my lady's need was pressing. I wonder she marked them not,—but that gay galliard pressed so closely with his wit, there was no time for her to notice the change."

" 'Tis perhaps as well as it is," replied Clara, "for Inez might have felt every unequal step, had she known they were not her own attendants who bore her litter ; as it is, she may less remark it, even if they be unskilful."

"Doubtless 'twill all be well," muttered Sanchiza ; "but 'tis odd to me if one wise head be not better than fifty brawling blades."

The ladies heard not her peevish remark, for they were now slowly retracing their steps towards the garden.

Dear to both was the sweet calm of that holy hour; and they prolonged their solitary walk till they had nearly reached the spot whence Hernandez' mission had hurried them, when their converse suddenly ceased; for the sound of voices was approaching them, mingled with frequent laughter. On turning an abrupt angle, they were suddenly confronted by the three angelic associates, Caelho, Gonzalez, and Pacheco. "*Well met, noble dames,*" exclaimed the first-named of the trio, bowing low with courtly reverence, which was imitated by his friends,—Pacheco, making a graceful obeisance, and Gonzalez displaying his usual awkward courtesy. "But we thought," continued the count, "to have met *three* fair ladies in these shades,—what luckless chance hath deprived us of an interview with the fair Castilian?"

"Donna Inez has been just summoned to visit

a dying friend," replied Clara, for Isabel vouchsafed not a word.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Caelho, elevating his eyebrows; while his companions echoed the word, Pacheco toying the while with his plumed cap, (for each noble stood uncovered whilst conversing with the ladies,) and Gonçalez gazed steadfastly on the deep blue sky. D'Ercilia continued his inquiries: "Will the death of her friend once more deprive the court of the presence of Donna Inez?—that is," he added, with a peculiar intonation of his harsh voice, "supposing death do indeed take place."

"I presume not, señor."

"That will be a mercy; for the loveliness of the noble Castilian renders her the cynosure of many hearts. I trust her attendance on the invalid will not be very prolonged,—the atmosphere of a sick-room hath heretofore proved prejudicial to the health and bloom of the fair maiden."

"No, certainly, she will return within an hour."

"So soon!" and turning to the nobles, he continued: "why, my friends, we might almost wait so long, for the more satisfactory decision of our dispute! 'Tis one, fair ladies," he said, addressing Donna Clara once more,—"'tis one that only such lips as yours may decide; but since the taste of Donna Inez is always appealed to in doubtful cases, we will e'en defer proposing it for the present. What say ye, friends?" As he turned to his associates, the ladies marked the countenance of Gonçalez darken, whilst that of Pacheco was evidently struggling with some suppressed, but scarce controllable emotion. It might have been laughter, save that there appeared nothing in the words of Caelho to provoke it. That cunning courtier wore an expression as nearly approaching to openness and candour as his nature could assume;—pomp, state, reserve, all seemed laid aside, and in their place a strange exhilaration, which in a later age, and another land, might have been supposed the effects of wine.

Whatever it might be, however, the ladies felt relieved when having scanned with a momentary glance the faces of his companions, he suddenly took his leave, bowing low as he said,—“Accept my best wishes, señoras, for your fair companion’s safe and speedy return,—and my earnest hopes that her friend may live yet a little longer !”

The three nobles turned into a diverging path, and Isabel, for the first time speaking, exclaimed,—“Thank Heaven they are gone !”

“Methinks,” said Clara, “the countenance of the Count d’Ercilia is repulsive, even when he would wish to be most agreeable. Amidst his condescending pleasantry I fancied I saw a bitter sneer occasionally lurking, like a serpent among flowers.”

“Likest is he to the arch serpent, whose cunning despoiled the primal pair of their Paradise !” observed Isabel with a sigh.

“Hark !—I hear again that exultant laugh ! Alas ! Clara, some creeping fear chills my very soul ;—oh ! be sure it betides evil, when Caelho laughs.”

"Thou art sad, Isabel,—let us leave these bowers. When the heart is at peace their silence is soothing, but thine appears heavy now;—the converse of our companions will best dispel its gloom."

"As thou wilt, dear Clara;—a cloud is indeed upon my spirit, inflicted, doubtless, by the hated presence of that bold, bad man. Let us to the chapel, the angelus bell will shortly toll, and till then we can offer up our prayers for Inez and her sick friend."

Whilst the ladies hastened on their mission of charity, the three nobles threaded the devious walks for many a rood; and having reached the boundary wall, they opened a small door, and espied without, a man holding two horses by the bridle. "How speed ye?" asked Caelho.

"*Well*, señor;" whispered the man.—"They are an hour's march before us on their way to the serra." As he spoke he pointed towards the distant range of hills that bounded the horizon; and the count vaulting on the back of one of

the steeds, waived a brief adieu to his friends, who watched the twain as they pricked their steeds at a brisk, but not flying pace across the flat plain extending between them and the rocky ground at the foot of the rugged serra.

Long time stood the knights conversing there, after d'Ercilia and his attendant had disappeared in the distance; but at length returning through the narrow postern, they carefully closed it, and re-entered the plaisaunce.

And now the booming sound of the angelus bell awakened the hushed echoes, calling all hearts to prayer. The knights heard it and quickened their steps, for the lateness of the hour surprised them;—numbers heard it, to whom its sole meaning was the blest summons to reverence the mystery of the Incarnation:—but there was one who as she listened to its heavy toll remembered only that promise of Inez, to return ere its sound was heard. Poor Sanchiza started when it reached her ear, and striving to sooth her perturbed mind with

various possible causes of delay on the part of her mistress, paced her chamber in anxious suspense, listening to every sound, and often fancying she heard the rustle of her lady's robe. After an hour spent in an agony of doubt and apprehension, she decided on attempting to find Donna Isabel or her friend Donna Clara, both of whom had (in consequence of the office each held about the person of the queen) apartments in the palace. Relieved somewhat of her uneasiness, by the exertion consequent on her resolve, Sanchiza quitted the range of rooms to which her acquaintance with the purlieus of the palace was chiefly confined, and soon became bewildered in a maze of stairs, galleries, lobbies, and endless passages.

She inquired of several attendants whom she met, the way to the apartments of the queen's ladies; but few knew them by name, and many a witting page, little heeding the anxiety depicted in the face of the good damsel, sent her on erratic and bootless journey. Had she felt

inclined to give up her intention, she soon had little inducement to do so, being quite as incapable of retracing her steps, and probably equally distant from her own apartment as from those she sought.

It chanced that she met none but domestics, who, intent on their own busy duties, knew little beyond them, and were acquainted only with those parts of the palace in which she found them occupied; sometimes she had to grope her way through dim passages, lighted only by narrow windows through which the last glimmer of the departing day came scant and gloomy; at others her eyes were suddenly dazzled by a blaze of light as she entered a corridor illuminated by flaming cressets. At length, weary of wandering through interminable apartments, and trembling with fatigue and solicitude, she resolved to open the first door from which the sound of voices came.

And now Sanchiza proved, what hath oft been shrewdly remarked, that bold act will oft

secure what timid caution may miss the winning of; for as she opened a door whence female voices came in low murmurings, she beheld, to her infinite surprise and joy, the attendants of Donna Isabel, discussing the merits of some robes which they were busily arranging.

When they beheld the pale and tearful countenance of Sanchiza, each was unsparing in her inquiries, to which her only reply was,—“ I am in quest of Donna Isabel, pray lead me to her instantly.”

“ She has some time left her bower with Donna Clara; they spoke of seeing thy lady, the noble Donna Inez.”

“ Ah me, ah me !” exclaimed Sanchiza, “ I have been a full hour bewildered in this cheerless palace; for I found none who could direct me hither, save one or two mischievous boys, who I fear led me yet more astray.”

“ Nay, an’ thou art not wise enough to seek othr pilot than laughter-loving page, thou deserve’st tired limbs, Sanchiza,” said one of the damsels, smiling.

"Yet by such a thoughtless elf is my noble lady guarded !" exclaimed Sanchiza passionately.

"And well guarded too, I doubt not, for these youths are all of gentle blood, and each aspires to be one day a belted knight. In office of trust the wildest of them would be found true as steel, as far as their young strength may serve ; though fond of a gamesome frolic in an idle hour, as well enough becomes their years."

"I' faith I think it ill becometh the young wittols to lead astray a bewildered creature, when life and death perchance may hang upon her speed.

"How ! what mean ye, Sanchiza," said the bower-maiden, now in her turn alarmed ; "doth aught evil threaten thy noble lady ? But in good time behold my mistress comes !"

Donna Isabel indeed it was, who entered the room accompanied by Donna Clara, and beholding Sanchiza, hastened towards her, demanding news of Inez. "I have been detained in attend-

ance on the queen, or should ere this have sought my friend ;—she is of course returned ?”

Tears gushed from the eyes of Sanchiza, as in a voice broken by sobs she detailed her watchings and her fears, with the difficulty that had attended her endeavours to find Donna Isabel. “ But now that I have at length met with you, I beseech you lose not a moment, for sure some dreadful evil threatens my sweet lady.”

“Thy fears outrun probability, good Sanchiza,” replied Isabel ; “ it may be, that Donna Inez, whose tenderness would scarcely permit her to refuse the prayer of a dying friend, is by her detained. What think’st thou, Clara ?”

“ It appears to me too probable to allow us to doubt that such is indeed the case ;—but I would recommend that a messenger be immediately sent to the widow’s dwelling, informing Donna Inez of our anxiety. He may suffice too for additional escort on her return,—a necessary precaution now that night is well-nigh at hand.”

The faces of the two ladies were pale and anxious,—foreach had fears which she chose not to reveal. A trusty serving man was quickly summoned, the exact direction to the house of Donna Maria given him by Sanchiza, aided by the two ladies, (each being too fearful of mistake to refrain from some additional particulars,) and with strict and reiterated injunctions to make good speed, the man departed.

The consciousness that a step had been taken to remove their anxieties, already lightened them, and with some appearance of cheerfulness the friends endeavoured to converse. But ever and anon the subject (so languidly sustained) was forgotten as they suggested some new and probable reason for the delay of Inez; or heedfully listened to some sound that appeared to refer to that which was uppermost in their minds. Yet such as reached their ears served only to remind them of the lateness of the hour, and thus add poignancy to their suspense,—the changing of the guard, and the quick sound of passing footsteps, as the

inmates of the palace took their places for the night. At length the messenger returned.—“ I had some difficulty in obtaining admission !” he observed as he entered the room, “ for the sentinels were already placed.”

“ Tell us quickly,—what answer to our message ?”

His tale was soon told :—Donna Maria de la Zibriera sent respectful and loving greetings, and save for the infirmities of her years, was quite well, but she was sorry to say that it was now some weeks since so high an honour as a visit from Donna Inez had gladdened her dwelling.

Isabel clasped her hands in an agony of speechless horror,—Sanchiza with a loud scream fell insensible on the floor, and Clara all pale and trembling, after dismissing the luckless messenger with a fitting reward, exclaimed :—“ Courage ! Isabel,—’tis no time for mere plaint when some vile and dastardly cunning endangers the life or honour of a noble lady. Weak indeed are we to work her rescue, but our mere voices, if they but

utter *her* name, will raise numbers, in a court so well supplied with valiant swords, to save or avenge her. Let us up and be doing."

"Yes, yes," replied Isabel, hastening to the door,—“we will hence,—to stay here is madness.”—But pausing on the threshold, she exclaimed,—“Yet whither shall we go?—who can trace her route?—night hath fallen on the hills, —’tis nigh two hours since the angelus,—four since she departed!”

“And,” continued Clara,—“there are few in the palace now that do not sleep,—probably none, save the queen, defer their repose beyond this hour.”

“The queen! the queen!” cried Isabel vehemently—“Yes, we will fly to the queen!” and hastening with the best speed their trembling limbs could command, through the narrow galleries, the ladies soon reached the royal apartment.

There stood the captain of the guard, a stern and aged knight, who long resisted their frantic prayers; believing that no greater cause for their

evident terror than some startling dream, could menace aught within that guarded palace. "We will not retire until our names have been given to the queen," said Isabel.

"The hour is so unseasonable, señoras,—the queen long ere this has retired to rest."

"She slumbers not,—I tell thee she never leaves her oratory till after this hour,—nay, an' she be not there we will ask no further."

The knight, yielding at length to importunity so urgent, called softly within the anteroom whose entrance he guarded, but on receiving no reply, disappeared, and returned leading a drowsy page.

"Thou wert swaggering but now, youngster," said the warrior good-humouredly,—“that thou couldst endure the fatigue of a squire's duty, nor ever faint or fail;—and lo! in five minutes thou art fast asleep!”

"Ah, valiant Don Diego," replied the merry page with a roguish look, "had we been even now companions in arms, keeping guard beside

beleaguered post, my watch had been as little endangered by the temptation of silken couches, as thine by the soothing converse of errant damosels."

"Let not thy saucy wit reflect on noble dames, thou malapert boy!—these ladies of the queen seek an immediate audience of her grace. Go thou and ascertain if she yet linger in her oratory,—for if not, your business, señoras however pressing, must wait till morning."

"Tell the queen that Donna Isabel, and Donna Clara, implore permission to speak with her," said the latter. The page withdrew, and soon afterwards returning, requested the ladies to follow him.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Delay in close awaite
 Caught hold on me, and thought my steps to stay,
 Feigning full many a fond excuse to prate,
 And time to steal, the treasure of man's day ;
 Whose smallest minute lost, no riches render may.”
Spencer.

“ Up to the mountain !
 _____ he that strikes
 “ The venison first shall be the lord o' the feast.”
Cymbeline.

“ No splendid palace fronts the flowery path,
 But cliffs of horrid height, and shades of death,
 And hovering, dread, and everlasting night.”
Dante.

“ And every sword, as o'er the billows dim
 The needle tracks the loadstar, following him.”
Moore.

SOON did De Lacy weary of the restraint that
 necessarily accompanied his secret abiding in
 the small hospice, and often wondered what

eccentric planet ruled his destiny, that he could not sojourn for a few months in a strange country, without being enwebbed in toils which must have been spread for others, since he was scarcely conscious of possessing there a friend or foe !

With an impatient spirit he counted the lagging hours, and each time Stephano with cautious secrecy approached him, hoped the moment was come for him to strike the long suspended blow ; resolving meanwhile that the marauders should find his energies hoarded, not wasted, by the delay. Several times during the three tedious weeks which he spent in captivity, his sister secretly visited him ;—the good friars also devoted every leisure moment to entertain him with anecdotes of their travels, and brought him all their little store of manuscripts to relieve his loneliness.

In such attempts at solace the time slowly stole away, the good knight summoning all his magnanimity to aid in reconciling him to his durance, and cherishing the proud hope of

rescuing some noble lady from the machinations of her enemies.

At length, on that bright and balmy evening mentioned in the last chapter, Stephano rushed without precaution into the presence of De Lacy, exclaiming : "Now, use thy best speed, sir knight—the snare is well laid, and the quarry firmly caught ;—but let us only be brisk and skilful, and the vulture shall be despoiled of his prey! No need of secrecy now, for they are all off to the serras!"

Together they sped to the dwelling of Sir Alfred, where the knight donned his armour, and provided Stephano with an iron morion and cuirass, a heavy sword and stout spear. And when mounted on a powerful steed, it must have been a nice observer that had distinguished him from the two trained troopers who were also prepared to attend De Lacy.

One other individual was of the party, a smart and dapper page, whose brown curling hair and bonny blue eyes betrayed his Saxon origin.

He alone rode beside the knight, his office being to beguile by cheerful converse the prolonged way, or gallop on hurried message of important nature; and by various services, which became more arduous and responsible as his years increased, to fit himself for receiving the golden spurs. Such was the training of the page in days of chivalry; and it was a noble species of education, although sometimes marred by the frailties of our fallen nature, which are, alas, ever defrauding poor humanity of the fair fruits planted by a sublime philosophy.

De Lacy and his attendants started at a brisk pace on their mission; but scarcely had the last of their small, though well-appointed party, left the shade of the building, when one, whose snowy locks might have betokened the feebleness of age, save that his quick and energetic gestures denoted no loss of vigour, hastily approached Sir Alfred, and beckoned him aside. He was mounted on a small but spirited mule, and the knight obeying his gesture, listened with deep attention

to words which fell with rapidity from the old man's lips. They were inaudible to the attendants, who sat in silence on their champing steeds; and Stephano inwardly chafing at the delay, began to calculate how much mountain ground each moment lost was placing between them and the fugitives. Still the old man conversed with even and fluent accents, while the whole soul of De Lacy appeared absorbed in the narrative; till at length breaking from the speaker, he exclaimed, "Lead on, good father; we will not lose another moment!—as thou sayest, the remainder of thy story I can hear whilst we journey on."

"Aye, aye," said Stephano, abruptly,—“the delays we have already suffered will increase by some leagues, our journey into the fastnesses of the serra.”

De Lacy started—"Ha! I forgot!" he exclaimed.—“Thy words, father, have well-nigh bewildered me!—I am this moment starting, as thou seest, on a quest of importance and honour.—

How can I make it shape with thy instant need?"

"Knowest thou no gallant knight who would undertake either adventure?—Lisbon is plentiful of bold hearts and willing hands."

"Thou sayest well, but I were loath to depute to another the duty on which thou wouldst lead me." Sir Alfred pondered for a moment,—then drawing a ring from his finger, he drew his page aside, and delivered to him the signet, with some charge inaudible to those around. Then addressing Stephano, he said, "Go, thou, good friend, with my true page, Hubert Eltringer; he will bring thee to one who will far better serve the cause of this unknown lady than could my few lances. Good speed will soon recover the few more moments thou must lose, and whoever the lady may be whose succour now devolves on another champion, rest assured as urgent a need, and as fair a cause demands elsewhere the lance of De Lacy." Commanding his men-at-arms to attend him, he now followed the flying feet of the old

man's mule, (who had not tarried during the delivery of his parting words)—and in a few minutes they all disappeared behind an angle in the road. Stephano gazed after them with a half stupified stare, but the page, who alone remained, aroused him from his trance of astonishment by bidding him push on towards Lisbon.

"Lisbon !" ejaculated Stephano,—“ why I thought we were about to pursue certain ruffians that have ere this reached yon serra with a hapless lady, to whose rescue thy lord was pledged !”

“ Seest thou not that some claim, yet more urgent, demands the knight's prowess ?—follow me, good Stephano ; we shall soon, with far more efficient force, start again to the rescue. The delay may indeed render the enterprise somewhat more difficult, but what of that ?—’twill but add to the honour.”

“ We Lusians are apt to think that there is sufficient honour in aiding the oppressed, without heightening the boon by deferring succour till

it is a chance if it avail to save. To be on those bare hills by night with such ungentle associates as those I wot of, were enough to crush a stouter heart than is wont to throb in the bosom of a court-bred lady."

"We will not anticipate evils that may not happen," replied Hubert, as they rapidly approached the city; "full two hours of daylight are yet at our service."

"Daylight and night-light," grumbled Stephano,—“we shall scarce see where one ends and t'other begins bye-and-bye.”

"Well, thy note will be more cheerful when we start again, with a good knight to lead us, and half a score troopers for company;—and as thou hast some apparent cause for blaming De Lacy, I give thee leave to grumble until then."

Of this permission Stephano failed not to avail himself,—but when he learned (though the page declined giving him further information) that the expected aid was a native of Portugal,

the disappointed guide contented himself with a quiet self-gratulation that the success of the adventure would no longer depend on those Islanders, whose minds must naturally partake somewhat of the unstable nature of their favourite element.

On arriving at the entrance of the capital, Herbert requested Stephano to await at the barrier, whilst he rode for the expected succours, and without staying to hear his reply, dashed beneath the low archway. Stephano sat on his horse the very personification of stupid amazement; and sorely was his patience tried, and many were the wistful glances he cast towards the white summits of the distant mountains, as he lamented that he had entrusted to any of the cold northern race the fate of hapless damsel.

At length Hubert galloped alone across the draw-bridge, and whispered to him in hurried tones,—“Never was fate so adverse to mortal wishes!—the knight whose aid my master recommended me to seek, has been some two days

absent from Lisbon :—Peace man ! and hear me patiently !—the best that could be devised, I have done.—By means of De Lacy's signet I have procured a guard of six troopers.”

“ And what wilt thou do with them ?” asked Stephano, impatiently, disregarding Hubert's command to listen without reply.

“ Rescue the lady, to be sure ! if God so wills. Do not thou mar my scheme, by divulging the little right I have to these Portuguese soldiers ; but act as a right trusty and faithful guide, assuring thyself that my master, and he to whom I was sent, will reward thee beyond thy utmost hopes.”

“ Nay, for that matter, young señor, I am already amply paid ; but what am I to believe ? canst thou, without a leader, tempt the dangers of yon rugged and frightful wilderness ?”

“ Speak not to me of danger ! my thoughts know no more of fear than do the bold yeomen among whom I was nurtured. Here come the men,—now Stephano, remember not my youth,

but guide me faithfully ; and though better aid hath failed the unknown lady, she hath leal and fearless champions who can do their devoir, as men engaged in holy cause."

"Now God bless thee, thou gallant boy," cried Stephano,—“and fear not for me,—I pledge thee my troth to stand by thee to the last !”—and he grasped the slender fingers of the English youth in his brown palm.

Just as the small party of troopers passed the city gate, the guard was changed, and the watch set for the night,—and as they all rode away, the heavy sound reached their ears, of draw-bridge and portcullis being raised and secured.

"What is become of daylight now ?" asked Stephano, as he pointed out to Hubert the first portion of their route, but dimly descried through the deepening gloom.

"There is One in Heaven who can make night as clear as day, if he will it to be so !" replied Hubert, solemnly ; then added :—"Is

not ours the cause of innocence!—therefore most holy, and under Heaven's benediction!—Lead on!"

Stephano, awed by his impressive words, made no reply, for he felt that of such youths as him who spoke, England formed her heroes. In perfect silence, therefore, and at the utmost speed he could command, he proceeded to track the path taken by the Gitani.

They were not long in galloping over the open ground; and now Stephano, alighting from his steed, which one of the troopers undertook to lead, with admirable skill and patience, but lessened speed, traced the foot-prints of his late associates over the mountainous regions which succeeded the level plain.

Soon he detected marks of hoofs, and rightly conjectured that the lady had been transferred to a *litiera*, or litter borne by mules. Their track was more distinguishable than that of the men, and he continued to trace it, even where no vestige of a passing step was visible to an ordinary eye.

Notwithstanding his address however, and his great experience in mountain ways, the gathering shades soon put an end to his usefulness, and the little party had only to choose between wandering on at hazard in the dark, or waiting till daybreak.

Stephano, as having most experience, was requested by Hubert to counsel him in his difficulty, and he thus weighed the two alternatives. "Why, you see, señor, we may go on, it is true; but what shall we gain by doing so, if when daylight comes we have lost all trace of our route? but if we rest here for about three hours, the way we then make will be clear gain, and meantime our horses will be rested, and ready for the toils of to-morrow."

This proposal Hubert reluctantly adopted, and having arranged the order of their watch, took the first half hour's vigil to his own portion.

It was greyest morning when they rose to resume their journey, but ere they left their resting-place the condessa (which Stephano exchanged

not with his master) was opened; and the party, after partaking of a hasty meal, gladly exchanged the brown hill's breast for the bounding pace of the courser. The cold dim light but faintly aided the guide, but each moment lessened his difficulties, and at length a flood of golden radiance began to tip with glowing hues the loftiest summits of the mountains.

Morning welcomed them with smiles of brightest promise,—an enterprise esteemed in those days of highest honour was before them, and there was not one of that blithe group whose heart beat not lightly and confidently in his bosom, as following the footsteps of their guide,—which became each moment more rapid,—the hoofs of their chargers glittered in the dawn, and crushed the fragrant heaths that carpeted the mountain.

Onward they pressed, still assured by Stephano that they were in the right track. He continued on foot; and, inured to mountain journeys, kept at a sort of trot in front of the cavalcade, and to Hubert's frequent inquiries, confidently replied,

that they must be gaining ground on the fugitives, since a *litiera* could not proceed at more than a walk.

Through rugged and precipitous ways Stephano led them, sometimes in the dry bed of a winter torrent, at others on the side of a rocky precipice,—now they cooled the hot hoofs of their coursers in some limpid stream, whose broken margin betrayed the flying feet of those they pursued,—now briskly careered over a small patch of verdure;—but more frequently found their path arid, stern, and bare. Thus toiled they on, their pace regulated by the state of their uncertain road, until the intense heats of noon, which, notwithstanding the elevation they had reached, were oppressive, forbade their further progress. At a moment when it was most desirable, they arrived beside a mountain stream; a few stunted pines slightly shaded it, and preserved the small patch of verdure that extended along its banks, from being embrowned by the summer sun.

There the weary adventurers halted, and

having loosened the bridles of their jaded beasts, who eagerly cropped the scanty herbage, the men sat down to their noontide meal.

The meal was ended, and the troopers yet rested awhile beside the stream, when they remarked the low sound of voices, which though evidently not far off, betrayed not the speakers. Some curiosity was excited, but none were inclined to waste their brief hour of rest in an idle quest, until at length Stephano, being somewhat recovered from his fatigue, suddenly started up, exclaiming,—“ I will have a peep at those neighbours,—they cannot be far off !,”

Following the direction of the sound, he with considerable difficulty turned an abruptly jutting angle in the overhanging cliff, and immediately beheld two men, armed cap-a-pie, reclining near a bend of the same stream of which himself and comrades had been quaffing ; but possessing the enviable advantage of being more verdant and sheltered. Near them lay two powerful

destriers, who appeared to have enjoyed a plentiful meal; fragments of herbage, evidently brought to them from some distant and more fertile spot, being strewed around. Both might have been selected from a herd of Andalusian steeds, for size, symmetry, and breed; one was a dark grey, the other black as Erebus.

Scant time had Stephano for his survey, for one of the twain perceived him, and raising his lance, bade him advance. Stephano knew well that if he attempted a retreat, the ponderous javelin would transfix him ere he had taken one backward step; remembering therefore that he was within call of his companions, he boldly approached the warriors.

The vizars of both were closed, and Stephano detecting by their armour, that though one was certainly a knight, the other was only a squire; congratulated himself that the odds were less against him than he had at first supposed. Before approaching too nigh, he commenced his apology.

—“No offence, I hope, gallant señors,—I am only one of a party of troopers, who are refreshing at a lower bend of this same brook; and hearing voices, came to satisfy myself that no hapless Christians needed succour.”

“Very good, merry sir; and pray to whose free companions dost thou belong?”

“Why,” replied Stephano, (willing, as many a man hath been, and is, to make the most of his friends, in the hope that he might perhaps obtain an additional degree of respect for their sake,)—“we have not all the same lord, señors,—I am, in fact, a retainer of a young Englishman, hight Sir Alfred De Lacy,—some of our party” (alluding to some remarks of Hubert Eltringer) acknowledge no less noble a master than a king, or at least Edward the Black Prince,—but the remainder and far greater body of our detachment have been lent to serve in our expedition by one who must be nameless.”

“Thou hast a pretty strong muster behind yon

boulder, if I may judge by thy words," replied the knight, (evinced, however, none of that emotion which Stephano expected to produce by such a swaggering description of their small company); "and pray," he continued, "what may be the expedition which has gathered so strong a force together?"

"No other than the rescue of a noble lady who hath been trepanned into this wilderness; and if thou be a brave knight and true,—which I nothing doubt,—we will welcome thy aid in the chase."

Ere Stephano had ceased speaking, the warriors had started on their feet—"Rescue of a noble lady!—this is no jest!" said the knight with earnestness;—"lead us to thy companions, friend; and if it be as thou sayest, our poor skill shall be added to thy present strength."

With lightened heart did Stephano bound to the spot where his companions still rested. There he was shortly afterwards joined by the strangers,

who were obliged to lead their steeds by a more circuitous route.

Rapid and eager were the inquiries with which the knight plied Hubert and Stephano, but the one was too intent on blaming, and the other on exonerating De Lacy, to furnish him with the information he sought. For particulars respecting the abducted fair one, he asked in vain ; but his impatience to proceed on the chase, overcame the reluctance of the men to defy the yet unabated heats of noon. Encouraged both by word and example, they remounted ; and the energies and tact of their new leader, whose manner and bearing indicated a habit of command, soon caused them to double the speed they had made in the morning.

Not long after leaving the spot of their noon-tide rest, they found the first habitation (if such it may be called) which they had seen during the journey. It was a wretched hovel, which the withered bush nailed beside the door might be

supposed to distinguish as a place of refreshment.

No inhabitant was visible, and the wayfarers were passing it at a rapid pace, when the quick eye of the young Hubert was attracted to a small slit in the wall, close to the face of the cliff on which it was erected.

With the restless curiosity of youth, he drew near, and perceived a small piece of wrinkled parchment, through which appeared thrust the point of a stick ; it was agitated with a tremulous but ceaseless motion, and when the page called to his companions, he found his voice echoed by a faint wail from within the building. The whole cavalcade was soon on the spot,—the dwelling entered and ransacked,—but it was some time before they discovered a low door which communicated with a vault extending beneath the floor.

Into that dark den several of the party descended, and quickly drew to upper day the drooping form of a youth, whose garments of

rich satin were soiled and torn, the plume in his cap severed as if by a sword, and his face disfigured by the blood which had flowed from a wound on his head. He was faint and exhausted, but after he had swallowed a little wine, and breathed for a few moments the pure air, he gazed anxiously around him, and strove to speak. His words, however, were not suited to the questions asked, but clasping his hands, he murmured,—“ Oh, lose not a moment, if ye be Christian men, but fly to the rescue of my lady ! Loiter not here with me—oh speed on !—speed on !”

“ Holy Virgin !” exclaimed the knight,—“ thy voice removes my doubt,—do I not behold Hernandez de la Sosia, the favourite page of Donna Inez ?”

“ Oh yes, good knight, unworthy that I am ! but what could any arm avail against four powerful men ?—O delay not for my tendance,—what if I perish here, so ye rescue Donna Inez from those cruel robbers !”

The knight made no reply, but ordering the men to resume their march, and push on at their utmost speed,—he gently lifted the wounded boy to his own saddle, and sprung behind him. “Now stripling, thou wilt have the full benefit of the mountain breezes, and when thou art equal to the task, canst narrate to me as we proceed the fearful mischance which hath befallen thy fair mistress.”

Hernandez was not slow in satisfying the wish of his protector, and having informed him respecting the summons which had caused Donna Inez to quit the palace, he continued,—“We proceeded on the usual route to the city for some time, when on a sudden the bearers of the litter informed me they must diverge a little on account of an obstruction occasioned by some repairs in the city wall. I proposed the deviation to my lady, who acquiesced, merely stipulating that they should lose as little time as possible. They pursued their new direction awhile, then turning an abrupt angle, suddenly

took a narrow and unfrequented path, and started off at a quick pace. I called to them, and would have followed the villains, but was instantly surrounded by four bandoleros, against any one of whom my slight Toledo blade was but as a willow wand. A blow on my temple deprived me of consciousness, and when I revived I was in yon dark and loathsome hole, into which one only ray of light, or breath of air, struggled through the narrow fissure by means of which I attracted the notice of your people. A small piece of parchment which chanced to be in my pouch, and a long stick that I found by groping on the floor, formed my simple contrivance; had it failed, I must have been ere now incapable of even that slight exertion.—But my beloved lady!—even now do I hear her sweet voice, imploring them to spare her page!—ah, sir knight, shall we save Donna Inez?”

“ Yes, boy; yes!—doubt it not;—who could harm a creature so fair and innocent?—some intimidation may be intended perhaps, but the fiends do not rule this world!”

The words of the knight fell on the young boy's ear as if pronounced with effort, and half choked in the utterance; and they rode for many a mile in silence. At length, as they crossed a lofty and arid precipice, on which their steeds, though chosen for a mountain journey, found their footing insecure, the piercing gaze of the warrior descried on a distant mule-track, an arriero with his train; and he instantly dismissed three of his followers with Hubert Eltringer to procure from him a horse or mule with saddle and appointments.

Such flattering inducements did Hubert offer for the favour, that the mule-driver was but too happy to comply with the request, and thus was Hernandez mounted on a useful steed, though possessing but homely equipments.

The sultry heat gradually subsided, and with less difficulty they hurried on, their only guide through the pathless wilderness being the track,—sometimes much trampled, and well defined, at others

scarcely distinguishable on the bare summits of the hills—by which the patient sagacity of Stephano led them after the flying feet of his late comrades.

As evening approached, the desolate region assumed a more habitable appearance ; the pines that had taken precarious root in the clefts of the rocks became less stunted, and here and there a group of stately cork trees crowned some lofty hill with majestic verdure. Sometimes they perceived a distant monastery with the small lugar that had collected around its protecting walls ; and the cultivation that appeared to have conquered the native sterility of the ground,—the windmill, now motionless,—the small vineyard,—the bridge erected over the mountain's torrent,—bore witness to the usefulness of the peaceful brotherhood. Here and there the scattered huts of the herdsmen who tended the mountain sheep nestled beside some sheltering crag,—and sometimes a solitary peasant was observed returning to his humble home ;

—but they obtained not, in their most extensive views, a glimpse of the party they were pursuing.

As the sweet evening hour found them still pressing on the steps of their guide, and eyeing the lengthening shadows with dim fears and boding hearts, they passed within hail of a simple monastery; of small size, but rendered venerable by time. Other travellers might have gladly sought its charities, and asked the shelter of its peaceful roof till day dawned; but they rode by, only noting, as they passed, the admonition of that warning bell;—’twas the summons of the brothers to their repose.

Stephano’s progress became slower as the difficulty of tracing the road increased, and he now and then glanced at the knight, as if anxious to guess how he would receive the announcement—which he felt must soon be made—that they could proceed no further. But there was a powerful influence in that warrior’s resistless energies, which, leaving no opportunity for a dissenting thought, subjected those among

whom he moved, almost without an effort, to his will; and Stephano continued, slowly indeed, and more slowly still, to point out the course of the robbers, but, at least, advancing.

At length the knight exclaimed,—“ I can endure this pace no longer ; far better to dash on under Heaven's guidance ! For my part, I shall endeavour to reach yon glimmering light—follow who will ! ”

It is needless to say that every horseman followed him.

CHAPTER VII.

"Light slowly sunk, and left the glimmering west,
And Night's dim robe the weary world o'ercast;
I only woke to labour and to woe."

Dante.

"His starry helm unbuckled, showed him prime
In manhood where youth ended."

Paradise Lost.

WHILST so many were straining every nerve to succour the hapless Inez, her distresses were not few. On beholding her stripling page struck to the ground, in his gallant, but hopeless, effort in her defence, she had sunk senseless in the litter; and, when consciousness returned, found herself moving rapidly across the uneven paths of the mountain. She attempted to address her bearers, but they were deaf to her beseeching words; and having, at a spot where comrades awaited them, transferred the lady to

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a litiero,* the two men who had been by Sanchiza departed. Those who now conducted her were as taciturn and insensible as their predecessors. They paid not the slightest regard, by word or look, to her prayers ; at length, giving up the hope of awakening in rugged bosoms some latent spark of benevolence, or by a heavy bribe procuring her release, they strove to gather consolation from the thought that she must soon be missed from the path and pursued.

If Inez entertained any doubt respecting the contriver of her captivity, it was soon dissipated, for, as pale and tearful she pressed her temples against the side of the litiero, the bright light from one of its windows was suddenly intercepted, and on raising her eyes to discover the cause, she beheld the exultant countenance of her enemy. She uttered no cry, but gazed at him for a moment with dilated and fixed eyes, whose dark orbs contrasted wildly

* A litter borne by mules.

her hueless lips and cheeks, she closed them with an expression of intense pain, and turning away her head, covered her face with her hands.

The count continued for some moments riding silently beside her, numbering perchance with his stony eyes the tears that stole between her slender fingers. "Fair Donna Inez," at length he said, with a low sneering voice, "wherefore this extreme distress? surely thou art terrifying thyself with causeless fears! Have my servants conducted thee without due care and deference?—if so, by heaven! the varlets shall dearly rue their negligence!—What, no reply? Perhaps, lady, if thy mood incline thee to silence, I cannot choose a more fitting time to impart the purpose of this journey,—undertaken, I swear, with infinite forethought and solicitude, and having for its sole object thy advancement and honour."

Thus, in tones of bitter irony, did Caelho address his prisoner, but Inez vouchsafed him

no reply ; and, quitting her, he for some time held close and whispered conference with his followers.

He approached her no more, and towards midnight a sudden halt aroused the captive from the train of painful thought into which her mind had wandered. Scarcely had she attempted to penetrate the gloom that surrounded her, when the door of the *litiero* was opened, and she was requested to alight. It was a female voice that addressed her, and hopeful that at least in one of her own sex she should find a friend, Inez obeyed, and clinging to the woman, was conducted by her into a low house.

They crossed a small apartment and entered an inner chamber. The lady looked timidly around, but no creature was there, and she ventured to scan the face of her conductress, now fully revealed by the light of a small lamp, which stood on a table whereon the woman was busily arranging a slight repast. Inez turned hopelessly away from that harsh and sinister visage,

and her first impulse when the woman invited her to partake of the refresco, (composed of viands far more choice and delicate than could have been expected in such a dwelling,) was to decline the proffered courtesy. Remembering, however, that a weakened frame is but an ill supporter of a resolved mind, she constrained herself to swallow a few morsels; but every effort to banish the drooping languor that oppressed her was unavailing, and she sat in her miserable resting-place, spiritless and unnerved—still crushed beneath the first shock of her unthought-of durance.

The woman, who was munching some fragments of a dark loaf, eyed the lady earnestly, as, with eyes rivetted on the ground, and lips and cheeks pale as marble, Inez sat motionless and silent. At length, drawing close beside her guest, she whispered: "They think they have done cleverly in shutting us up here, but two women can easily overmatch such blunderers."

These few words had the effect of an electric

shock on the lady's nerveless frame, and caused an instantaneous transformation : her drooping eyes were raised to the face of the speaker, their spiritless languor changed to a glance of bright intelligence ; her countenance beamed with hope and ready confidence, and her frame arose from its drooping posture. The Promethean spark had done its work—the beautiful statue was vivified ! “ Speak ! ” she softly whispered ; “ oh I conjure thee, by our common nature ! say, is there any way to save me ? ”

“ Alack, I don't know,—but many a wild dove netted by the fowler, hath taken wing ere his hand could grasp it !—Suppose thou wert to put on my holiday dress, and thus clad, steal out the back way. They are mostly sleeping round about the door, but even if they should catch sight of thee, they'd perhaps think it was me.—No harm at least in trying.”

“ But what would become of me among these frightful rocks ? ”

“ Why e'en hide thyself for an hour or two ;

when day-light comes, they will hurry off to seek thee, and we will meanwhile contrive thy return to Lisbon."

Inez started up.—"Quick, quick!" she cried; "there is at least a faint hope in thy suggestion, —anything is preferable to the horrible despair of the last few hours. Where are thy festive garments?"

The woman speedily produced the trim mountain costume, and as Inez commenced throwing off her costly robes, she asked,—"What wilt thou do with these?"

There was a singular expression of cunning on the woman's face as she replied: "I shall hide them carefully till thy return in the morning, when thou wilt gladly restore to me my humble weeds." As she spoke she busied herself with arranging the holiday garments on the fair form of the stately Inez, who remarked that they were new, or nearly so;—and in a few moments the rich robes of the courtly lady were exchanged for the simple but picturesque attire of a peasant girl.

Gathering around her the folds of her c
Inez whispered: "It but remains to thee to
me the way from thy dwelling,—yet ere I
accept this ring. Let what may betide, I v
not that thou shouldst think me ungratefu
now lead me hence."

The woman accepted the ring with
delight, and softly led the way towards a low
narrow door, opposite to that they had en
As she crossed the small and crowded apart
however, she struck her foot, either by acc
or design, against a small stool that stood in
way. A harsh voice in the outer room inst
shouted,—“Who goes there?” A confused
around the building succeeded, and above a
heard the haughty tones of d'Ercilia giving
orders.

Inez stood on the spot where her step
been arrested, listening with breathless atte
whilst the woman went out to appease, if po
the commotion. Low whispering voices, an
pressed laughter reached the lady's ear, and

a few moments of intense suspense, the woman returned, saying that the litiero was at the door, and all the attendants awaiting to resume the journey. At the same moment Caelho entered the apartment, and perceiving in Inez a disposition to decline quitting the cottage, he without a word of expostulation carried her in his brawney arms and placed her in the vehicle. Thus, ere she had decided whether the woman who had suggested the escape had really meant to aid her, or was an instrument to further the designs of her foe, the swinging motion of the uneasy carriage admonished Inez that she was again on her journey. To offer resistance was utterly beyond her power, and she sat where the count had placed her, helpless, and well nigh despairing.

Her unconscious eyes, weary with incessant weeping, now rested on the distant hills, which were brightening with the soft reflected light that harbingers the dawn; but she noted not how rapidly it travelled over the wide undulating line of the eastern horizon. Gradually, as the

gleam spread, it deepened;—now the silver shimmer became a belt of flame,—now glowing crimson,—till at length the whole eastern portion of heaven and earth was radiant with the transcendent glories of the approaching sun.

So splendid was the scene that it imperceptibly drew the fair captive from the contemplation of threatened evils; and as she gazed, the fresh morning breeze wafted over the arid precipices, the faint call of some distant convent to the hour of prime. Gladly did the lonely maiden listen to the sound; and was reminded by the solemn chimes, that the protection of saintly prayers was around her. Her sad heart was cheered,—and her thoughts arose with humble confidence, in unison with those worshippers who had erected their peaceful dwelling in the wilderness. A soft calm stole over her broken spirit, healing its hopelessness, and bringing to her mind its strength, its fortitude, and that habit of reliance which seemed to have forsaken her in the darkness and desolation of the first hours of captivity. The

morning orison offered by her pure and suffering soul was animated by love and hope, and boundless trust ;—and as it arose from her pallid lips, the first glance of the rising sun saluted her with his cheering beams. The timid captive was invigorated, refreshed, strengthened,—and though sadness still sat on her fair brow, it was no longer the heavy pallor of despair.

Great was the surprise of Caelho,—when, the sun having fairly risen, he approached Donna Inez,—to behold the trembling, weeping girl, who on the previous evening had shrunk like a frightened bird from his fierce glance, now confront him with a look of indignant firmness. Her cheek was yet pale as sculptured marble, but it was unwet by tears ; and awed by the dignity of her reproachful glance, the villain's heart quailed, and his voice faltered.

He attempted a few words of courteous greeting,—but Inez interrupted him by asking in as stern a tone as was possible to one so gentle, for

tidings of the youthful page, whose fate :
heavy load upon her heart.

“ Where is Hernandez de la Sosia ? ”

“ Fear not for him, fair Inez ;—but for rashness, I find, no danger had threatened as it is, a slight wound is all the injury he received.”

“ Where is he ? ”

“ In safe and tender charge, señora ; but trust not thy sweet thoughts by such solicitudes come to announce cares more suitable for a young and lovely.” The villain paused, Inez, admonished of her weakness by her ing heart, in her secret soul called on the name of the Mother of the Redeemer. length the count resumed, speaking with un rapidity. “ Yes, far other destiny shall be noble lady, than such as has of late been portion !—Fairest Inez, thou shalt be raised the brilliant rank thou wilt become so well when (envied of all, and peerless among

noblest as well as the fairest of the land) thou art the theme of minstrel's song, and the brightest star of a glorious court, thou shalt bless Caelho, that he constrained thee to be happy! Thou canst not have forgotten my constancy, and persevering love."

"Hold, señor,—I have long since said that if I endure thy voice, it must be to the exclusion of a theme already too often answered."

"So thou hast indeed decided, lady," replied Caelho, scornfully,—“but thou wilt do well to remember, that at the present moment, the dictation of conditions rests with *me*.” He paused, and Inez, feeling that his observation was too true, remained silent.

"That I have loved her long and truly,—that twice her father approved my suit, is well known to Donna Inez,—but she is yet to learn that since Don Sebastian's decease, I have obtained the permission of King Alphonso to win her hand:—in fine, lady, I am here to woo!"

It is impossible for language to describe the

sardonic smile with which Caelho regarded his "ladye love," as he bowed, when uttering the last words, till his plumed helm touched his saddle-bow ;—then thus continued :—" Since, however, thou art indifferent to the arguments with which I was prepared to conquer the insane and unaccountable objections with which thou hast hitherto received my proffer of affection, perhaps thou wilt permit me at least to express my *determination* ;—'tis simply this,—to wed thee. I am generous, señora, and willing to forget thy haughty scorn,—and if thine own perverseness mar not thy brilliant prospect, thou shall return to court Countess d'Ercilia,—the first as well as loveliest of the noble matrons of Portugal."

Again he paused, but no word was breathed by her white and quivering lips ; and he resumed : " Should some lingering caprice render thee still blind to the vast advantages of an alliance so brilliant,—at least remember, señora, that it simply rests with my will to immure thee for life in some inaccessible fastness

of this wilderness, where thy existence could be known to myself alone, and thyself dependent on any lingering spark of affection which may outlive thy faded charms, for a casual relief from the monotony of thy lonely days. Choose therefore—and quickly—between such a life, and the dazzling and happy destiny of Caelho's bride."

By a strong effort Inez now murmured:—
"And pray what time remains for me wherein to decide?"

"Deliberation methinks should be needless,—the superior advantages of one of the two alternatives being so evident."

"What time," again she asked, "ere my doom be fixed?"

"Even till we reach the spot where the priest awaits us, which perhaps may not be ere the hour of noon."

"To-day!" exclaimed Inez, starting from her drooping posture,—“art thou so hasty in inflicting the cruelty which will render my days few, and full of sorrow?"

"To-day shalt thou be my bride, lady; no danger of mischance now, to despoil me of my long-cherished hopes!"

"How would I welcome such chance, though it were my instant death!" faltered Inez,—“But thou saidst the priest awaits us?”

"I did,—and I perceive thine eyes (which my patient love hath taught me to read) brighten at the tidings, as if hoping that the good man may interpose betwixt thee and me; but I warn thee to beware, nor attempt to overturn plans which are far too surely laid for thy feeble efforts but to ruffle! No otherwise canst thou change my purpose save to procure those rites denied which thou mayest hereafter ask in vain." As the shuddering girl shrunk back in the litiero, Caelho—perceiving that she displayed no inclination to reply—with a profound obeisance left her to her meditations.

Sore was the trial that assailed that defenceless lady, and stern her temptation to distrust the Heavenly Providence that had hitherto sustained

her! But she wrestled with the fiend, and spent the weary hours in prayer for strength and succour. The appeal of the helpless and suffering, ever all powerful at the Throne of Mercy, was not *now* unheard, — a trustful confidence in an ever-watchful Providence gradually fortified the soul of Inez; and when at noontide the cavalcade was compelled to pause, and she partook of the viands that were placed before her, Caelho believed (although she still averted her eyes from his dreaded visage) that she acquiesced in a fate which she found unavoidable. Notwithstanding that conviction, however, his temper was soured. The place where they had intended to rest, and where some fresh mules awaited the litiero, was still far distant; the hour of repose, therefore, which they were forced to grant the wearied beasts, was wasted by the count in fretfulness and discontent.

Whilst the men lay stretched beneath the shade of an overhanging cliff, and their leader, unable to compose his chafed spirit, paced to

and fro across a small patch of turf, which owed its verdure to the narrow rill that had been a blessing to the travellers and their steeds ; the attention of Inez was attracted by a dark object now and then appearing above the edge of a boulder opposite to her. At first she supposed it the wing of a mountain bird, but ere long distinguished a wide sombrero, beneath which a brow and two dark eyes appeared for an instant, then sunk again behind the fragment of rock. The eyes, during the moment they were visible, were fixed on Inez, and a gesture of satisfaction as they disappeared, convinced her that the stranger had gained his object in attracting her notice. Presently she beheld him emerge from behind the boulders, and steal cautiously away, —keeping under the shadow of an abrupt precipice, which projected so suddenly across the path he took, that only in a creeping posture could a human being pass beneath it. That circumstance probably prevented his being observed as he stole away ; save by her, who was ever on the watch

for some chance of escape from her enemy. Just ere the unknown disappeared, he once more turned his head, and gazing fixedly on Donna Inez, pointed upwards, as if commending her to Heaven's care ; the next instant he was gone.

The circumstance, though trifling, was full of hope ; for, that some attempt was about to be made for her rescue, Inez could not doubt.

The journey was resumed ;—eager to make up for lost time, Caelho spared neither man nor beast ; and it was a mercy to Inez, as well as to the exhausted animals, when a change of mules relieved them of a burthen beneath which they had long tottered.

Shortly afterwards, however, by some singular chance, the fresh mules fell lame, and with the utmost difficulty made slow and painful progress. Pitying their misery, Inez implored to be allowed to walk ; but Caelho disregarded her entreaties, and had the mules urged on by goads. His cruelty, however, defeated his aim ; causing the strength of the poor animals to fail them the more speedily,

and their advance to be proportionately checked. D'Ercilia cursed and swore, and stormed in rage ; whilst Inez, though she trembled at the violence, blessed Heaven for the delay, and took it as an assurance that she should yet be saved.

Still however they progressed, though slowly—evening was now approaching, but no prospect of succour. Again fear began to harass the captive lady, and her weary spirit found no trust once more beginning to waver,—when a solemn chant arose on the evening air, and they gazed around, hoping, as they hope in such a situation is so desperate that any change might bring relief. She discovered that they were passing within hailing distance of a lowly monastery, but her anxious eye could perceive no creature near save her sullen guards. They, with their leader, pressed closely around her, as if fearing she should endeavour to procure aid from the good brethren. But no precaution was unnecessary, for it was the

of complin, and the whole community was at office.

But the stern horsemen, who scarcely permitted her tearful gaze to behold the venerable walls of the religious house, could not exclude the soothing sounds, so plaintive, sweet, and heavenly, that reached the ear of the poor captive, and cheered her drooping heart. As she listened, she accompanied the well-known strain with the words of the "*Qui habitat*," her favourite psalm,—"*He who dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, abideth under the protection of the God of Heaven ;*"—and it seemed to her as if angelic choirs breathed to her, in heavenly melodies, those blessed words,—"*Quoniam in me speravit, liberabo eum : protegam eum, quoniam cognovit nomen meum.*"*

The count marked, but comprehended not, her brightening eye, and kindling cheek : as

"Because he hath hoped in me, I will rescue him ; I will protect him because he hath known my name."

clasping her hands, whilst her lips murn thanks for the blest assurance, she made further effort to look around, but folding her arms in her capote, resigned herself to the protection of Him who slumbers never.

Another hour's slow and painful travel followed, and when in the dim twilight the cavalcade halted, Caelho himself assisted the lady from the litiero. She found herself before a low portal, into which, ere she could reach the nature of the building, she was instantly hurried; and the dazzling glare of torches, by several swarthy looking men around, blinded her bewildered eyes.

A short time, however, sufficed to convince that she was in a small mountain chapel, as was erected in those wild regions for the accommodation of the herdsmen. Before the simple altar stood a stolid priest with two young boys, also surpliced; and Inez knew that she was the victim whom they awaited to sacrifice.

Rather cheered, however, than daunted,

what she beheld, the lady advanced to the altar ; and addressing the priest, claimed his protection from the threatened oppression of those who had brought her thither.

The good man—whom extreme age had bent, whitened his few remaining locks, and covered his embrowned face with wrinkles—gazed on her as she spoke, with unanswering eyes, and turning to a man of dark feature, attired as a mountain peasant, who stood beside Donna Inez, said in querulous tones : “ Is this thy unfortunate child ? ” The man nodded, and the priest, opening a book, commenced reading the marriage service. But Caelho approaching to take the hand of Inez, she indignantly refused his proffered clasp, and throwing herself on her knees before the aged pastor, besought him to listen to her.

“ Aye, do listen ! ” muttered Caelho, with his peculiar sneer,—“ pray listen ! ”

“ Alas ! ” said the feeble old man, “ why, hapless child, wilt thou perversely oppose the wishes

of those whose sole desire is to see thee safe and happy !—Too well do I know thy sad case ; —oh be not insensible to good advice, but make amends to thy poor father for the anguish thou hast cost him !”

“ They have imposed on thee, venerable father,—alas, I have no parent now but God ! Ah, do not aid these bad men in an act of most cruel oppression !”

“ Yes, yes,—I know all about it ;—but the best thing thou canst now do, is, to accept the gallant husband thy father has provided for thee ; —it is not often a peasant girl obtains so generous a suitor.”

“ A peasant girl !—have they dared to so impose on Heaven’s minister ? Ah ! now I comprehend the artful cunning of that wretched accomplice ! Disgrace to woman’s form ! that could thus aid in the destruction of a helpless creature ! O father, I implore thee hear me !—Yet alas ! what can I say ?—these vile garments witness against me !”

An exultant laugh was Caelho's reply to her frantic words, and the priest exclaimed,—“Come, my daughter,—let this be the last petulance of thy froward youth; embrace the honourable state that is offered thee, and a husband's protection shall enable thee to escape the snares with which thy dangerous beauty hath waylaid thy soul.”

“And is it possible that a minister of the Deity can counsel me to take a false vow?—to swear to love and honour one whom I abhor?”

The old priest, without heeding her words, proceeded in monotonous tones to read the marriage service, but Caelho hoarsely whispered: “Is this thy acquiescence in thy unavoidable destiny?—do not heaven and earth refuse to snatch thee from me? The priest *hears not a word thou sayest*,—succumb to thy fate, or provoke a worse!” Dark was the frown with which the count uttered those ominous words,—and Inez shrieked aloud, and clasped her hands in wild despair, as she at length comprehended the double toils with which she was surrounded.

At that piercing cry, the priest started,—the book dropped from his feeble fingers, and Inez perceiving that his dulled sense was not entirely destroyed, sprung toward him, and screamed in his ear : “ They have deceived thee,—I am no peasant,—and I charge thee in the name of the queen, my mistress,—” Further words were denied her, she was dragged from his side ;—but the old man was startled, and appeared to waver.

The swarthy peasant who represented her father, and who was no other than the Gitano Hamet, now advanced; and pointing to the dress Inez wore, with a dolorous expression of feature, as if pained to the heart by the frailty of his child, clasped his hands in an attitude of entreaty, and pointed to the book, as if praying the priest to persevere. The old man looked bewildered, gazed around him, paused for an irresolute moment, then once more began to read.

“ Merciful heaven !” exclaimed Inez, “ is there no voice that will confirm my feeble words ?”

She had scarcely spoken, when a tremendous sound echoed through the building;—part of the stone mullion of one of the narrow windows fell with a tremendous crash, and, as a voice exclaimed—“Yes, I proclaim this lady of no peasant blood!”—a man leaped into the midst of the group, and stood before the altar.

Inez instantly recognised the dark figure she had beheld at noon, and as he flung aside his sombrero and capote, started at beholding the slight form and pale features of the young alchymist Don Henriquez de la Zibriera. “I assert before God’s altar,” he shouted, in tones so loud and clear that they reached even the dimmed sense of the superannuated priest,—“that blackest treachery hath beguiled this noble lady from the—”

“Hold!”—exclaimed d’Ercilia, his face livid with rage and distorted by maddening passions: “thou dost but darken her doom by this interference.”

“I am here to defeat thy wicked wiles!” re-

plied Henriquez, drawing his slender rapier, and placing himself betwixt Inez and her oppressors ;
“ nor shalt thou approach this noble lady,—save over my body !”

“ What art thou doing, bold and impious man ?” exclaimed the priest,—“ baring the implements of death, in the house of peace ? Is it not sufficient that thou hast already sacrilegiously despoiled the sacred edifice, but thou must threaten to pollute its holy precincts by the effusion of blood ?”

“ This is he,” shouted Hamet,—“ of whom I told thee !—he who would fain destroy my hapless child, body and soul !—Seize him, my men, and bear him hence.”

The slight form of Henriquez was easily overpowered, and the Gitani, (of whom Caelho's attendants were altogether composed,) in spite of his struggles, protestations, and entreaties, dragged him to the door.

• “ Expel him from the chapel,” cried Caelho, “ but let him not escape.” Then bending to-

wards Inez, he whispered in her ear—"And now, lady, since we have lost sufficient time by thy ridiculous caprices, decide at once, whether thou wilt permit this ceremony to proceed, or forego it for ever!"

The men who overpowered Henriquez, by this time reached the portal, and removed the heavy bolts which had been carefully drawn to prevent all chance of interruption. But as they would have led him forth, they were prevented by a living tide, that drove them back,—threw down or rushed past them,—stalked up the aisle, —reached the altar;—and the foremost of them, a knight clad in black armour, seizing Caelho by the shoulder, as he bowed with mock gallantry before the trembling Inez, flung him, with ineffable scorn, to the further side of the building.

What words can pourtray the feelings of that rescued maiden, when she found herself saved, —and by whom?

She at once recognised her champion in the

warrior of stately bearing and resistless majesty—
Forgetful of all fears, doubts, and mysteries,—
she sprung towards him, and clinging to his arm, —
wept tears of joy and gratitude on his mailed —
shoulder.

And in the rapture of that triumphant moment, the arm which had liberated, surrounded the fair form that seemed to crave support;—and beholding only her presence,—remembering but her peril,—conscious but of her safety,—folded the trembling girl to his bosom! It was but for an instant;—with a sudden start the warrior seemed to recover his self-possession. He made a profound obeisance to the lady, and conducted her within the sanctuary, where yet stood the poor old priest and his acolytes,—astonished and scared at the confusion to them so strange and inexplicable.

But in that irresolute and dangerous moment, when Inez clung to her deliverer, irremediable injury was inflicted on the gallant knight.

Hamet, quick as thought, beheld now his oppor-

tunity,—he stole behind the warrior, and with the subtle edge of his Damascus blade severed the lace of the vizorless helmet. It has been before remarked, as being of that peculiar make, which, having a cruciform opening in front to admit light and air, fastened only on one side. The moment chosen for Cloton to complete the work, was, when the black knight retiring from the sanctuary, where he had placed Inez in safety, confronted all who were assembled in the small chapel.

The plan had been long contrived, often practised, and was perfectly successful:—the side fastenings being severed, offered no resistance when the blow was struck;—the helmet rolled to the ground,—and a cry of astonishment echoed through the building, as the feat revealed the high pale brow, flushed cheeks, and haughty eyes of Don Pedro! Inez sunk on her knees before the altar, burying her face in her hands;—Caelho, who had just gathered himself from the spot to which the royal arm had hurled

him, quailed beneath the sternness of his most unexpected glance ; Cloton was struck down by one of the prince's followers ;—but ere a word could be uttered, or another blow measured, or a step taken,—the torches were simultaneously extinguished, and all enveloped in total darkness !

It was some moments ere the terrified acolytes could procure a taper from the adjoining sacristy—but when by its aid a torch was found and relighted, d'Ercilia and his myrmidons were nowhere visible :—they had, under cover of the darkness, stolen away, and the ringing echo of their horses' hoofs was heard dying away upon the mountain.

CHAPTER VII.

"All other doubts, by time let them be cleared ;
Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered."

How different were the feelings with which Inez entered the mountain temple, when, at break of day, the aged priest prepared to solemnize the daily sacrifice, from those with which she had first crossed its threshold ! A humble couch had been prepared for her in the hermit-like dwelling of the infirm pastor, and whilst she there took the rest she so greatly needed after the fatigue and agitation of the two last days, a loyal guard kept wakeful vigils around the lowly spot.

It was whilst she there reposed, that Don

Pedro learned from the pale alchymist, the share he had taken in the lady's preservation.

Alarmed by the inquiries made by the messenger whom Donna Isabel had sent to his mother's house, he had followed him to the palace, and ascertained, by importunate inquiries of the guards, who were just leaving their posts, that a lady of the queen's household, attended only by a page, left the palace in a litter, and was not yet returned. Fearing some evil threatened the sweet girl whose image was enshrined within his fervent heart, he, undaunted by difficulties, pursued his quest, ascertained the route the fugitives had taken, and by a chain of accidents traced them to the mountains. Scarcely had he entered their rugged defiles, when, attracted by voices, and aided by the darkness that had spread around him, the youth crept sufficiently near a nook where four men were carousing beside a small but bright fire, to hear their conversation and mark their appearance. It was not difficult for him to recognise

the bearers of the lady's litter—a detailed description of whom his minute inquiries had elicited from the sentinels. Their remarks confirmed his fears for the safety of Donna Inez—enabled him to guess at the route she had taken—and revealed to him the exact spot where some mules were to be in readiness on the following day, to relieve those that were now conveying her litter.

From such slight information, Don Henriquez formed his plans. He succeeded in passing the lady and her captors whilst they rested at noon, and stole unobserved to the spot where the men who had charge of the fresh mules slumbered. It was he, who, by introducing a small piece of granite beneath the hoofs of the animals, occasioned the lameness which had deferred their arrival at the chapel, and was a principal means in circumventing the designs of the infamous Ouelho.

Don Pedro listened to the narrative of Henriquez with deep interest ; and in it, as well as the perseverance of the English youth, and his own

unlooked-for meeting with Stephano, recognised the interposition of Providence in behalf of oppressed innocence. Nor was there one found with the mountaineers and simple herdsmen, and an arriero's scanty company, kneeling around the lowly altar at break of day, that failed to bless the Guarding Care, which ever watcheth over those whose blameless life and undoubting reliance give them a claim on Its protection.

Least of all did she,—who, from peril more dreaded than death, had been so opportunely rescued,—forget to raise her heart, on that bright morning, in humble gratitude and fervent charity. Nor did the pang inflicted by the startling discovery, in her champion, of the royal youth whose noble qualities were the theme of every tongue, long oppress her grateful heart; for, although she quailed at first beneath the bitter self-reproach, that she had been treasuring in her unconscious heart the tenderest feelings for the husband of another, yet it appeared so easy to cherish a respectful homage for her friend,

without a thought that could, if revealed, have given pain to the Infanta, that she detected no evil in the resolution she quickly formed, to entertain towards him such distant reverence as one might feel for an angelic guardian.

True it is, that, though the discovery she had made excluded her from all hope of being other to that gallant spirit than the creature of his bounty, she yet felt none of the painful disappointment which had smote her, when she fancied she beheld him in De Lacy. On the contrary, the first shudder, as the sin appeared which she had unconsciously stood so nigh,—and the remorse she felt at having, in the surprise and joy of her deliverance, clung so familiarly to his arm, —having past away; she found a kind of rapture in the prospect of devoting her life to the homage of his exalted virtues, by disdaining to bestow on one less worthy, the heart he had deigned to prize. Relying as fearlessly on his honour and purity as on her own, she saw no

danger in such dreams ; for she knew he had at an early age, and in obedience to the peremptory command of his self-willed sire, consented to a marriage, which the policy of courts had suggested,—and she recognised in the prince's respectful attentions to his apathetic bride, the noblest evidence of his virtuous self-control.

These thoughts, during the hours when she was supposed to sleep, occupied the mind of Donna Inez, whilst every scene in which the unknown prince had so nobly acted, passed in rapid review before her. Once more she beheld him on the breast of the mountain, crushing beneath his blade the cunning foe who had interrupted her flight from Spain ;—again did she in the Gitani's cave bind her kerchief round his bleeding arm ;—to her “mind's eye,” appeared his noble form, as on his coal-black steed, he conversed with her on their way to the monastery ;—and she heard again the exultant tone with which he welcomed the travellers to his native land. Their parting in the portal

of the venerable monastery,—the present of the bugle,—the scene in the pine-forest,—recurred to her memory ;—nor was his noble indignation forgotten, when he saved her beloved father from the gripe of the usurer, and herself from the base noble who would have extorted her reluctant hand from the terrors of her filial love.

No longer was she at a loss to understand her appointment in the queen's household, the generous protection extended to her father, or the interference of Don Pedro when Caelho inveigled her from her seat in the queen's barge. More dangerous far was her recollection of that interview which succeeded her enemy's overthrow in the garden. Every word that had passed between them was recalled, and the impassioned tenderness to which the prince (secure in his disguise) had given way, and herself (unconscious of his ties) listened to, well-pleased, suffused her cheek with blushes. 'Twas now, that, remembering the apprehensive and earnest glance which had so startled her at the banquet, she readily com-

prehended the mixed feelings with which he sought to discover, whether, misled by his gift of the chain, she would transfer to De Lacy all the interest she felt for her unknown friend. "Ah, little cause hast thou to fear, my benefactor!" she softly murmured; "the heart of Inez, though refused to thee, may never be granted to another! Too happy is she in having been deemed worthy of thy regard,—too grateful for thy watchful guardianship,—too utterly incapable of rendering thee the slightest requital for thy devoted courtesy,—to hesitate a moment in resolving to spare thee the pain of beholding her thou never may'st call thine, another's bride! Yes, Pedro!—though thine I can never be,—yet as a vowed and sacred thing, I can, and do, consecrate myself to thee!"

And when after brief and broken slumbers Donna Inez knelt before the altar, she remembered and ratified her resolve.

It being impossible (with due regard to

the lady's comfort) to reach Lisbon that day, it had been a matter of consultation how they should so arrange their journey as to arrive at some convenient resting-place ere night-fall; and it was ascertained that by taking another route from that which they had already trod, they would be enabled to secure the shelter of a convent, at about an equal distance from the mountain chapel and the city.

A guide was selected therefore, ere the small congregation dispersed; and shortly afterwards, friendly adieus were exchanged with the aged priest, whose humble mission was assisted by the alms of the grateful stranger, and his blessing followed them as they quitted his lonely dwelling.

Now Inez found a thousand charms in the wild but extensive scenery, the arid overhanging rocks and frightful precipices, which on the previous day had filled her soul with horror. How different was the countenance which she beheld when she turned towards the window of her

litiero, where still rode a knight armed cap-a-pie. Joy illumined her radiant eyes and spread a tender glow over her beautiful cheeks, and hovered around those lips, whose smiles had been pronounced by the gallant De Lacy, fatal to the beholder.

Every object in the sterile wilderness was decked for the eyes of both, with the hues of Heaven; for that mighty spell was on them which can convert the bare and herbless mountain into a blissful paradise! What music is that which salutes the lady's ear,—soft and low, and of exquisite tenderness!—it is the voice which never hath been so attuned to other ear than hers, save when she was its theme, and hence, amid the gay scenes of the court had been unrecognised.

Simple were the subjects on which he spoke, —matters of trifling import; but it was in the tone and manner of his words that their interest lay; and long after the former had been forgotten, the latter haunted the young girl's memory, tenacious and undying.

It might be, that occasionally some vague sense of danger would warn the prince,—but if so, his ~~naughty~~ reliance on his own strength stifled the friendly whisper; or the fascination of the delightful intercourse rendered him powerless to resist it.

Ah, little did Alphonso dream, when wilfully uniting his reluctant son to the uncongenial mate whom policy had assigned him, of half the injury he inflicted on the hapless prince. Possessing a heart capable of extreme tenderness and delicacy, he was formed to enjoy in the highest degree the charm of female society; but his taste was unusually refined,—his lofty intellect had been sedulously cultivated, and he required in the companion of his life a mind congenial to his own. One less so, could scarcely have been selected than her who called him husband; hence the eagerness with which he sought refuge from his domestic disappointments in the excitement of knightly adventures; and this rendered his name famous for deeds of bold and generous

It was in an expedition of such a nature that he met with the Castilian exiles ;—and from that time the fate of Inez, and her protection from her artful foe, had become so deeply interesting, as to engross his enthusiastic mind, engage his ardent sympathies ; and ere long her extreme loveliness, artless modesty, and sweet intelligence, entangled him in an attachment which exercised a mighty influence over his destiny.

But not to anticipate, or loiter longer with the past,—return we to the travellers.

Too happy to dream of approaching evil,—and because their thoughts were innocent, beholding in their light converse no danger to the rights of the absent,—those youthful hearts noted not the rugged road they traversed,—or marked it only to deck the wilderness with the brightness that illumined their own souls. Every scene displayed to them was hallowed to the memory of after years,—every object on which they gazed together, though but the flight of a mountain

bird, the gnarled boughs of a blasted pine, or the ruins of a Moorish town,—was dwelt on with delighted eyes. And when noon arrived, and pausing in a shaded spot beside a mountain stream, they shared with their attendants the mid-hour of refreshment and rest, there was in either bosom an unacknowledged conviction, that all the pomp and glory of courts,—the triumphs of stately pageants, the luxuries of sumptuous banquets, were but stale, unprofitable, and wearisome, when compared with the sweet peace and delighted contentment of that sylvan meal.

They prolonged the delicious rest, idly listening to the tales of the merry Hubert, who narrated sportive anecdotes of his native home, or sang his country's most popular lays; or told of De Lacy's adventures, in which his sojourn with the Moor, and subsequent concealment, so deeply connected with the escape of Inez, were not forgotten.

The latter subject led to the knight's mysterious abandonment of the adventure; regarding which

Hubert could give no explanation, but offered to pledge his life to its redounding to the honour of his master.

Time, that steals so wearily along when sorrow loads his wings, flew swiftly o'er the loiterers, obliging them at length to resume their journey ; and when they once more traversed the arid road, their lengthened shadows fell around them, and refreshing breezes met them as they advanced.

The prince continued to ride (when the nature of the ground permitted) beside his beautiful charge, dividing his efforts between averting every inconvenience threatened by the rugged way, or uncouth vehicle, and relieving, by amusing converse, the tedious journey. After a few hours travelling, however, Don Pedro remarked, that, notwithstanding her efforts to sustain the lively discourse, fatigue was imparting an air of languor to the fine eyes of Inez, and robbing her cheek of its bloom ; and mindful of the trials she had undergone, he sent forward

one of the party to look out for the yet distant convent, in order that the lady might be cheered by news of her place of rest.

They continued thus advancing for a considerable time, when suddenly the scout wheeled his horse, and hastily fell back upon his party.—“Now cheer thee, sweet lady!” exclaimed the knight, “the scout hath descried in the valley, which he commanded from yon eminence, the convent to which we are hastening.—Ho, Joas, see’st thou the dwelling of the Carmelites?”

“Yes, señor, it is but a few paces from the base of yon steep crag: but another sight drove me back in such haste; for lo! as I looked down into the valley, I descried a knight hard beset. He was defending himself with a few followers, against thrice the number of assailants. Unless he have instant succour, he will be overpowered, though he doth his devoir right manfully.”

The prince started, and was about to hasten to the rescue, but looking at Inez, paused. “O!

do not hesitate to succour thy brother knight," the lady cried.

"Here, Hernandez," the prince hastily said—"thou hast proved thyself deserving of the trust; once more thy lady is committed to thy charge. Take this bugle,—I know thy skill in woodcraft,—should harm approach Donna Inez, though but in the shape of an ungentle breeze, blow three mots thereon, and I am with thee. Be watchful, prompt, fearless!—Thou, Stephano, with the guide and three troopers, remain beside the litiero.—Hubert, with the remainder, follow me!"

"My place is here," said Henriquez de la Zibrieria, planting himself beside Donna Inez—"what is to me the fate of all the steel-clad knights in Christendom?"

There was bitterness in his words, but the prince heeded them not; and, with a smile and graceful adieu to Inez, he urged his gallant destrier to the rescue of the endangered knight. The lady watched his receding form

until, shouting "St. Jago to the rescue!" he plunged with his followers down an abrupt descent; then sinking back in her litiero, she restlessly awaited the termination of the adventure.

No fear of its consequences mingled with her thoughts; it would have been treason against her true knight, to doubt for a moment his skill or prowess; but the dull vacuity of mind oppressed her, which ever follows the eclipse of the heart's sun.

And now, in the perfect stillness that surrounded them, faint sounds arose from the valley, —distant shouts and the clashing of armour; and the quick ear of Sosia recognised other echoes, for he suddenly exclaimed—"Hear'st thou not the rapid tread of horses' hoofs, señora, in the direction whence we came?"

"Alas! I hear no sounds but those that float upward from the valley."

"Hark!—'tis nearer; permit me to quit thy side for a moment,—this abrupt ascent commands the road for many miles."

“As thou seest best, good youth : but me thinks the clashing of swords rings every instant louder.”

A moment of time sufficed for the page to mount the cliff, and again he had returned to the side of the litiero.

“Mine ear did not deceive me, señora ; yonder come, at a rapid pace, a troop of of horse ;—if their intentions be hostile, our little band will be easily overpowered : now, therefore, methinks is the time to wind the horn.” He raised the bugle to his lips as he spoke.

“Stay, Hernandez ; lest perchance thou summon the prince needlessly, and perhaps thereby involve him, or the knight he is aiding, in extreme peril. Rather, do thou first parley with the approaching party ; at the slightest sign of hostility thou canst give the signal.”

The page with a low obeisance obeyed, and met the strangers just as they arrived within sight of Inez and her attendants. Without pausing, however, to confer with La Sosia,

they continued their rapid pace, and in brief time after the utterance of the last few words the litiero was surrounded by armed troopers.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ That sigh

We sometimes give to things that pass us by
In the world's crowd, too lovely to remain ;
Creatures of light we never see again !”

Moors.

WE left Azayda in her mirador, clasping in her small hand the office-book, De Lacy's parting gift.

Long she stood motionless, recalling every look and word of the interview that had just past, identifying in her mind the noble English youth with every hero whose beauty, grace, or prowess were celebrated in her countless lays. When she at last opened the illuminated manuscript, she discovered with considerable chagrin, that it was written in a language totally

unknown to her ; but every page being radiant with symbolical or historical groups, many of which even her slight acquaintance with the Christian mysteries enabled her to understand, she found more pleasure in the sealed volume than the first glance at its contents had permitted her to anticipate.

Whilst thus occupied, she heard steps in the adjoining saloon, and recognizing them, hastily concealed the newly possessed treasure, and flew to meet her beloved father.

Abu Amir folded his lovely child to his bosom, and seated himself beside her. After a few moments of grave silence, during which Azayda occupied herself in numberless conjectures as to the possibility of her interview with De Lacy being known to her sire, the Moor addressed her

“ A marked change has appeared in thee of late, my Azayda,—from a childish, unreflective girl, thou hast become thoughtful, sedate, at times almost sad. Hath it escaped thy father’s-eye that the delight thou didst formerly find in

thy birds and flowers has well-nigh ceased?—or am I ignorant that thy wonted occupations no longer charm thee? Fear not, my child, I reprove thee not,—then why that self-accusing blush? I know thou art on the verge of womanhood, and the sports of thy childish days have become insipid to thee, whilst the loneliness of my unshared abode oppresses thee with its gloom! But, core of my heart! all this shall be amended!” Azayda carried the hand of her father to her brow, but presumed not to reply, and after a short pause, he continued: “I remarked the joy thou didst find in the society of the young English maiden, and thence learned the want that is craving at thy young heart. Be happy, my Azayda, thou shalt no longer be alone!

“A kinsman of thy mother’s, Ibrahim Aben Paez, hath an only son, to whom it hath long been decided thyself should be contracted when arrived at a fitting age. Reluctance to part with my last earthly treasure, hath caused me

to defer the ratification of the contract, although repeatedly reminded of it ; and I tremble when I think how nigh thou wert being sacrificed to my selfish affection.

“Thou knowest, my child, how vain have been my efforts hitherto to discover my gaunt foe ;—he still lives, and is at large, therefore this place is not safe for thee ; and although a guard ever paces around its walls, thy father suffers agonies every hour that finds thee here.

“I have therefore consented at length to the prayer of my friend, and to-morrow the youthful Nadir arrives to claim his bride.—But thou tremblest, my child, and the hue of life fades from thy cheek and lip ;—is there aught in thy father's words that is contrary to thy wishes ?” Azayda attempted to reply, but was so completely stunned and overpowered by the sudden and unthought of communication, that her pale lips refused utterance to her words. “Fear not, my beloved child,” the Moor softly said,—“every wish of thy heart is dear to Abu Amir, and

shall be gratified in aught that does not compromise his honour. Speak then, without fear, thy thoughts."

"Alas, my father, I only ask to remain with thee," the young girl gently murmured;—"the dove is in its nest, where else could it be happy?"

"But my child! the years of man are few, and mine have been shortened by sorrow; since then it is the lot of children to survive their parents, I would provide thee a protector, ere Azrael summon me to the tomb. Yet fear not that I would condemn thee to the arms of one repugnant to thee,—ah no! too well do I remember mine own lost happiness, to omit my best endeavour to secure thee a lot like thy mother's; though not, oh righteous Allah! her hapless doom!—Thou shalt, unobserved, behold this youth, and if he please thee not, far be it from Abu Amir to play the tyrant towards his only child. Yet I pray thee, Azayda, suffer no wilfulness to rob the young emir of his bride;

but endeavour, as the most pleasing act of obedience thou couldst offer to thy sire, to regard him favourably.

“ The youth is well beloved in Grenada, and of vast wealth; and though he already hath a harem containing some daughters of the first nobles of the kingdom, yet even the temperate monarch, Muhamed Abu Alahmar, the immortal builder of the Alhambra, whose wives were his friends and companions, sanctioned the customs of our nation; and I doubt if in all the empire of the Moors, a single emir could be found, who, like thy sire, would devote himself for life to one beloved object. Yet, alas! were there more Aminas, there might be more Abu Amirs!—Allah Akbar, God is great!” And the Moor gravely stroked his beard as he uttered his usual exclamation.

“ God is *great*, my father!” replied Azayda, —“ He is also *good*, and will not deprive me of my only parent.—Oh leave the future to His beneficent disposal, and suffer me to remain beside thee.”

"Thou wilt have far different thoughts when thou hast beheld thy destined spouse, my child,—nor will long prefer the tenderness of an aged father, to the love of a youthful noble," said Abu Amir, faintly smiling.

"To-morrow Nadir Aben Paes will take his evening meal with me in the hall which is opposite thy saloon, after which, we shall walk in the court; thou canst unseen observe him, and future opportunities shall decide thee. Ah, think not that I wish thee to cling to my withered and sapless age! No, my beloved child! 'tis the hope of thy sire that thou wilt accept the spouse he has selected for thee." As the gentle Abu Amir ceased to speak, he arose, and having kissed the fair brow of his child, departed.

With an impatience that consumed her throbbing heart, Azayda awaited the evening hour wherein she might again enjoy the society of Manuel, so long forgone; and in accordance with her wishes, found on that evening more than her usual opportunity. Houadir was occupied in

superintending preparations for the expected guest and his attendants ; not failing the while to let such dark hints escape respecting the purport of his visit, as enabled the fate of Azayda to be more then guessed at among her father's attendants.

And now in the shadowed bower sat the fairy girl, whilst Manuel unlocked for her the precious office-book, and gave her an insight into the first rudiments of the Latin tongue. The old man found his pupil apt, and most eager to learn ;—and when he informed her that every Christian who had the slightest education was familiar with the venerable language of the Church, she besought him to enable her to acquire it. But during the whole of their conversation, her father's news was floating on the surface of the young girl's mind, and often drew her thoughts from the words of her venerable instructor ; but the extreme respect she felt for the humble old man checked every attempt to introduce the subject, and she knelt to receive his parting

blessing without having disburthened herself of her perplexing thoughts.

As she knelt before her preceptor, a sudden rustling among the branches, followed by the quick sound of footsteps, startled both, and Azayda had just sprung to her feet, when the vision of a mail-clad figure darted by the entrance of the arbour. Ere it had passed, however, the maiden and her instructor were descried, and astonishment rendered both speechless, when, clad in complete armour, but wearing his vizor up, De Lacy stood before them. In extreme agitation he threw himself at the feet of Azayda, and passionately exclaimed,—“Forgive this bold intrusion, fairest lady,—only for one moment will I dare to trespass on thy privacy;—I came to ask one question, and depart! Oh give me leave to speak!”

Azayda looked at Manuel, as if requiring his counsel in a situation so strange and startling—and he, regarding De Lacy with grave earnestness, replied: “Speak, sir knight, but

briefly; the consequences would be dreadful if thy intrusion here were perceived."

"Alas! and will not Azayda breathe one word?" murmured Sir Alfred.

"'Tis unworthy thy noble nature, sir knight, to kneel before the creature who owes to thee her existence," sighed the gentle voice of Azayda.—

"Arise, I beseech thee!"

"Not till I have heard from thy lips an answer to my inquiry. I returned this evening to wander around the spot which contains so sweet a treasure; and meeting one of Abu Amir's slaves, found a relief to the restlessness of my mind, in making inquiries respecting him and his beauteous child. With what horror did I hear that thou art about to be added to the harem of one of the voluptuous young emirs of Grenada! I beseech thee, lady, is it true? And art thou content with such a fate! Can that fair being, in every lineament of whose speaking countenance, even the transient glance that was vouchsafed to me, read delicacy, candour, and inexhaustible tenderness,—can

she be satisfied to share with a crowded seraglio the caresses of one who regards her but as a slave ? Pardon me, sweet lady ;—with the customs of thy people I am indeed almost a stranger,—but it appears to me impossible that such a contract can be concluded, save at the sacrifice of thy noblest feelings,—the destruction of thy mind's peace ! Thou art silent ! By the blessed saints she weeps !” he exclaimed, starting from the ground and rushing towards her.

“ Stand back, young man !”—said Manuel with grave dignity,—“ my strength is not yet so entirely sapped by age, but that I am capable of sustaining this drooping maiden.”

“ Art *thou*—who must be of Christian birth, though lost to thy father's faith,—art *thou*, too, leagued against this gentle and helpless being ? —Yet speak, oh Azayda, De Lacy can—aye and *will* (an' thou biddest him) save thee from a fate far worse than that which menaced thee so lately.”

“ Thou art unjust to this good Christian, noble

knight," the young girl said in faltering tones,—
"nor wholly mindful of the tender love of my
indulgent parent, who leaves his child's choice
unbiassed save by the gentle influence of his
wishes."

The countenance of Sir Alfred fell, and his
eyes were fixed regretfully on the slight veil that
had hastily concealed the countenance of Azayda
as he entered the arbour. "Am I then to
believe that Azayda consents to this union?"

"Oh no! Allah forbid that I should forsake
my father!—Thou hast a right to know," she
added, in a softer tone, "since thy generous
sympathy urges the inquiry. Azayda loves too
well the home of her childhood, and feels too deep
a sympathy in the sorrows of Abu Amir, to
suffer his anxiety for her welfare to render
his dwelling desolate. Art thou satisfied?"

"I fear, lady, that persuasion will conquer
thy resolve, and thy generous sire forbid thy
devoting thyself to him, to the exclusion of
nearer ties."

"Fear not, noble De Lacy, Azayda *cannot* wed with the Moor. I appeal to Manuel," she added, turning to the aged slave,—"*even thou* wouldst not counsel me, though my father's displeasure were the consequence, to enter the harem of Aben Paez?"

If De Lacy was astonished to behold the high-born lady refer to her slave in a matter of such importance, still more did he marvel, when with a look that might have befitted the tutor of a prince, the old man replied: "Beware how thou pledgest thyself to abide by thine own will, gentle lady;—and thou, sir knight, be satisfied, and forgive me if I suggest that 'tis time this interview should terminate."

The youth's blood mounted to his brow, at receiving this intimation from one of such lowly station, and the light flashed from his ardent eyes. But the mild dignity of the old man's look and manner quelled the rising choler, and soothed the perturbed mind of the young warrior. "Promise me," he said, after a moment's

irresolution, "that should any evil threaten this sweet girl, thou wilt summon me to her aid."

"I gladly promise thee, sir knight,—and, foreseeing as I do, a path of some difficulty before her, charge thee to hold thyself in readiness for the summons."

"With this assurance I depart. O, Azayda,"—and the youth's voice grew low and tremulous,—
"I know not whether to bless or regret the fatal moment when I first beheld thee!—But what do I say?—Is not even the pain of this moment preferable to the joyless existence which alone I knew ere I beheld thee? Oh yes!—welcome then my rosy fetters,—whilst I may cheer my absence with the sweet hope that Azayda remembers me."

Ere Manuel could interpose, the impetuous youth had carried the hand of Azayda to his lips, and darted from the spot. The old man fearing some peril from his recklessness, followed him; but ere he could reach the portal of the harbour, the knight had leaped the wall. "Now may God protect thee from the guard, thou agile and

fearless youth !” the good man sighed, as he stood for a few minutes listening with most intense anxiety.

Azayda watched his countenance the while with a trembling heart. “Thinkest thou he is safe ?” at length she murmured.

“Yes, he must have evaded the guard, and is ere now past the valley.”

They continued to listen, but all was still save the voice of one of the sentinels, who was murmuring the cadence of a popular roundelaye. The listeners now breathed more freely, and Manuel gazing earnestly on the eloquent face of his beauteous companion, said,—
“ ’Tis a fair and generous youth, though far too bold ! I would not that he came to harm,—yet surely he deserves some reproof for intruding so unadvisedly into this sacred spot.”

“Remember, Manuel,” replied Azayda, “he had heard of the hideous contract which would give me to Nadir Aben Paez ;—surely I ought to feel grateful for the interest he takes in my welfare.”

"But his words were over bold; what right hath he to concern himself with the domestic affairs of Abu Amir!"

Azayda silently pondered for some moments, then raising her eloquent eyes, in whose liquid depths thousands of unrevealed thoughts were slumbering, she gazed earnestly in the old man's face as she said,—“Alas, Mannel, thou knowest I am ignorant of the usages of thy people,—O tell me, why came he hither!—Do the knights of Christendom address in the language which thou callest ‘over bold,’ the damsels with whom custom permits them to converse so freely! Or is it possible that De Lacy presumes on my inexperience!—But no!—the thought were treason!—Oh no! he is all honour.”

Her eyes were still fixed with an inquiring gaze on the countenance of her instructor, who replied: “Far be it from me to charge so noble a knight with aught derogatory to his fair fame: and know, gentle Azayda, that to have addressed thee as he did, without being in heart

and mind devoted to thy service, were to earn the infamous brand of perfidy. Didst thou think of this when listening to his words?"

"I feared to dream it possible," murmured the maiden, averting her head.

"What didst thou fear?"

"Lest I should mistake his friendly zeal for that homage of which his sister sometimes spoke, whereby the knights of Christendom select one—one only love, and devote to her their life-long service and affection. Ah Manuel!" she continued, with the confiding earnestness that was usual to her,—“as I listened to Edith's tales of pure, single-hearted devotion, could I choose but envy the Christian maidens? Yet how might I believe that this glorious De Lacy could turn from the cultured minds and fair forms that have surrounded him from his childhood, and prefer for one moment the poor, untaught, and (as he believes) infidel Azayda?"

"Art thou capable, thinkest thou, of requiting such a love with the constant and faithful de-

tedness which makes a Christian dame cling
her lord through every reverse of fortune :
During for his sake, sickness and sorrow,
ison and exile, if God so wills ?”

“To be able to love and suffer like a Christian,
must have her freedom of choice !”

“I will ask thee, a few days hence, whether
you couldst engage thus far, for Nadir Aben
aez :—thou wilt answer me sincerely ?”

“I will so answer thee now !”

“How !—thou hast not yet beheld thy father’s
oice.”

“Nor will I ; for too well my heart assures
e that never for *him* can it throb with any
her feeling than aversion.”

“Art thou not hasty, lady ?”

“No, nor canst thou, knowing me to be a
hristian, wish to see me wedded to the Moor.”

“How know I, what the designs of God are, in
y regard ?—it may be His will that thou sacri-
e the incipient regard which is awaking in thy
oung heart for De Lacy ; and earn as the re-

ward of thy self-control, the salvation of infidel husband and his household."

"Ha! what meanest thou?" exclaimed Azayda, clasping her fair hands, whilst a s paleness gathered over her countenance.

"Simply, to do my duty, and aid thee to form thine. Have I not often told thee that things are at the disposal of the Great Sultan and if we go not contrary to His will, must to our good? Place thyself and thy desires in His hands,—if to be the bride of the English knight be for thy eventual and permanent fare, rest assured that He will join your hands—but at the same time hold thyself in readiness to take, if it be His will, one less acceptable to thy youthful fancies."

Tears were in the downcast eyes of Azayda as she asked,—“But how am I to know His blessed will?”

“*By consenting to no sin to secure thyself*—Such would be clandestine correspondence with the Christian, or a petulant refusal to con-

with the expressed wish of thy indulgent sire, that thou wouldst endeavour to approve of the young emir. See this countryman of thine own, —how know'st thou but he may be more suitable for thee than the stranger, who has rather dazzled thy imagination, than won thine esteem ;—and requite, as it so well deserves, the generous indulgence of Abu Amir, by doing thy utmost to approve the choice on which his heart is anxiously fixed."

"Thy counsel may never be resisted, thou wise old man ;—I promise thee !—And now, Manuel, let me not forget to tell thee that in a few days I shall complete my fourteenth year, when I am at liberty to open this packet and examine its contents." And Azayda drew from her bosom the small silken bag. "It is not a mazoozah, or charmed amulet, as I once thought; but was formed by my sweet mother, just ere her death, and by her own hands placed here. Behold !—on the cover I am directed to open it on the day I named."

Manuel traced with difficulty the faded characters, and returned it, saying, "Doubtless it contains such instructions as a dying mother might wish to whisper from the tomb, when her daughter grew sufficiently matured to comprehend and retain them."

Azayda kissed the precious relic, and returned it to her bosom. "To-morrow eve I meet thee again at the same hour;—yet, no,—I promised my father to spend that evening in my saloon."

"Obey him in aught which he can lawfully require, if thou wouldst be directed by heaven, my child!—a single hour will suffice for thy instruction in the language of Christendom; let me meet for no other purpose until the third day from this, when I may perhaps aid thee in deciphering thy mother's bequest. The sun hath sometime set,—we have prolonged our interview beyond our usual time; thanks to the numerous preparations for to-morrow, which have prevented our being interrupted."

“ Give me thy, blessing father, and I depart.”

The maiden kneeling received the wonted benediction, and left the bower. Shortly afterwards Houadir found her reclining on an ottoman in her mirador.

CHAPTER IX.

“She made a sign
To bring her babe ; 'twas brought, and by her placed ;
She looked upon its face that neither smiled
Nor wept, nor knew who gazed upon it ; and laid
Her hand upon its little breast,—and sought
For it—(with look that seemed to penetrate
The heavens)—unutterable blessings, such
As God to dying parents only granted
For infants left behind them in this world !”

THE three following days passed heavily by Azayda. Faithful to their agreement, her interviews with Manuel were brief, and entirely spent in combatting the difficulties of the Latin tongue, which the fair student mastered with extreme facility.

But Manuel soon ceased to doubt what would

be her decision respecting her Moorish suitor ; and in the course of his attendance on his master, failed not to perceive that Abu Amir was himself grievously disappointed in his intended son-in-law, whom a selfish indolence rendered incapable of any noble or generous effort.

Breared in luxury, and pampered by the most lavish indulgence, the only son of the emir formed the greatest possible contrast to the fair child of Abu Amir ; who had been timely rescued from a course of training almost as pernicious, by the healthy teachings of Manuel. It was scarcely possible that, with her awakened intelligence, Azayda (being permitted by her indulgent parent to exercise her own judgment) could have esteemed the voluptuous Moor, even had he been the first aspirant for her favour ; but after having formed her ideas of manly perfection by a model so perfect as the gallant and courteous Englishman, not a chance remained of her approving the indolent Nadir.

This Manuel soon perceived,—nor was slow in

discovering that Aben Paez entertained no doubts respecting the object of his journey, whilst Abu Amir grew daily more estranged from his countryman. But he kept his calm eyes on all, deeply anxious for his young neophyte, and more than ever clinging to the hope which he had feared to indulge, lest he should betray his fealty to his lord, and his meek dependence on the Supreme Will,—that heaven had destined his pupil to be a Christian's bride!

The birthday of Azayda had now arrived, her fond father crowned her with flowers, and fervently blessed his beloved child. Courtesy to his guest, however, prevented his spending it, as had been his custom, within her apartments; but as he was leaving her bower, he whispered:—“Perhaps, my Peri! 'tis the last natal day thou wilt spend with thy uncheerful sire.”

Azayda clung to his arm, and stayed his retiring steps, saying,—“Not so, my father; oh! say not so;—Azayda sees no temptation in—

yon heavy and unspiritual youth, to lure her from her father's love! Another,—and another,—and many more such days as this will the happy child of Abu Amir spend in his bosom."

Tears glistened in the gentle eyes of the Moor, as, straining her to his heart, he hastened to join his guest.

Short was the siesta which Azayda took on that day,—for ere Houadir returned to her, she had started from her couch, and drawing the silken packet from her bosom, with trembling hands broke the seal. On opening the silken envelope, a piece of thin parchment, curiously folded, and closely written over on both sides, fell from it; she guessed its characters to have been traced by the hand of her mother, and pressed it repeatedly to her lips.

The writing was distinct, and perfectly uninjured; but to the extreme disappointment of Azayda, its meaning was shrouded in an unknown tongue. Not long, however, did she

ponder over the impenetrable scroll, ere recognised several words which had been familiar to her in the course of her Latin studies ; and hastily bringing the small office-book compared the two, and soon decided that they were both written in the same language. Flushed with impatience, and trembling with expectation, she caught up both precious manuscripts and hurried to the garden, where, with joy she beheld Manuel just entering it, his gardening implements in his hands.—“ I have opened the amulet,” she exclaimed, “ but I pray thee open the Allah, it be not sealed to thee as it is to me.”

The old man, taking from her the open parchment, regarded it with wrapt attention whilst the flashing eyes of Azayda were fixed on his thoughtful countenance with a passionate eagerness, which appeared anxious to read and reflect, what he gleaned from the impenetrable scroll. On a sudden Manuel dropped the manuscript, and looked on Azayda for a moment with a tearful glance, then raising his eyes and clearing his

hands to heaven, he burst into broken exclamations of thankfulness, and wonder, and benediction !

Still murmuring incoherent exclamations, he turned his steps towards that arbour which had so often witnessed their conferences, and the pair having entered it and taken their accustomed seats, the old man once more received the parchment from the hands of his impatient pupil. " It is written in imperfect Latin," he exclaimed, " but its meaning is plain, and of wondrous import !" — Azayda drew close to his side, and as the good Manuel translated and read to her, her mother's testament, she bent over the scroll, and endeavoured to follow him in tracing the precious words.

It was a beautiful sight ! — and beheld with joy by angelic eyes, — the scene in that secluded bower ! Beneath its roof of leaves, the aged teacher and fair young student seated side by side, perused the characters traced by a hand that now was dust ; and made their own, the

thoughts of a spirit long since disembodied from its earthly clay.

The calm, mild, benevolent features of the old man, so strongly marked, so full of intelligence, formed a striking contrast to the almost infantine loveliness of the innocent girl; as did the broad and angular proportions of the teacher's form, with the sylph-like and graceful symmetry of his pupil.

Frequent exclamations burst from the lips of Azayda, as her good instructor and truest friend read to her, with but occasional hesitation, the words of her deceased parent;—but we pass them over, and give unbroken the substance thereof, which was as follows.

“ To Azayda, my beloved, and (now alas!) my only child ! May the choicest blessings of the Most High be showered on her for ever—
“ more !

“ The hand of death is upon me,—and the dark portal of the grave yawneth before me ;
“ but ere my bruised heart cease its painful

" **th**robbings, let me endeavour to make atone-
 " **m**ent for the weakness that hath brought the
 " **j**udgment of Heaven, rather than the mercies
 " **it** intended, on my ungrateful head! But that
 " **th**ou mayest not, by underrating my trials, too
 " **h**arshly judge my fault,—nor yet continue
 " **i**gnorant, by my weakness, of what concerns
 " **thy** eternal peace to learn and practise,—
 " **b**ehold I give thee in brief the history of
 " **my** life.

" The mother who bore me I never knew,
 " **a**nd my infancy and earliest youth were spent
 " **i**n the care of a woman of gentle birth and
 " **c**ultured mind, who had been torn from her
 " **h**ome and friends by my father's Zeghris in
 " **o**ne of the incursions of the Moors into
 " **S**pain.

" Won by her sweetness and meek patience,
 " **my** sire entrusted to her the charge of his
 " **m**otherless child; and soon the task of minister-
 " **i**ng to my infant wants, and satisfying the cra-
 " **v**ings of my dawning intellect, softened to her

“ the loss of her loved home, and the p
“ restraints of captivity.

“ But there was one lofty conviction
“ above all else availed to render her res
“ to her fate ;—she believed herself design
“ an overruling Providence to instruct r
“ Christian truths. She viewed her trial
“ sufferings as the price she paid for the en
“ privilege of rescuing one immortal soul
“ the gulph of unbelief ; and well did she
“ herself of her trust.

“ Oh that I had proved worthy of
“ sacrifices !

“ Ere yet my mind had fully felt the in
“ ance of her instructions, two brothers
“ blessed order of the Redemption of Ca
“ appeared in Grenada,—whence, at the c
“ much suffering and peril, they at lengt
“ ceeded in rescuing several unhappy being
“ had long languished in hopeless slavery
“ the means of these white-robed messen
“ mercy, my beloved instructress was rest

“ her friends, her country, and the sublime
“ practices of the faith she knew so well. Be-
“ fore we parted, however, she prepared me for
“ receiving the sacred rite of baptism, and pro-
“ cured that, at the hands of one of the holy
“ men who redeemed her from captivity, I was
“ made a Christian. How movingly did she exhort
“ me to preserve my faith as the most invaluable
“ of blessings ! narrating for my encouragement
“ many instances of tender maidens, and even
“ children, who had preferred to die rather
“ than forego their hopes of eternal life.

“ I readily promised, and believed myself
“ strong to perform ;—nay, my too confident
“ heart beat high at the thought of suffering
“ martyrdom in the cause of truth. Alas !—
“ how little did I know its weakness !”

“ My instructress quitted me,—I was alone
“ among unbelievers,—vainly yearning to breathe
“ to others my eternal hopes, for all who sur-
“ rounded me believed woman’s existence to ter-
“ minate in the grave. Sometimes I ventured to

THE QUEEN'S LIEGES.

int at brighter destinies, but derision was all
I gained for my lofty aspirations; and the fear
of ridicule held my spirit in bondage.

“ Whilst my mind was thus enslaved, a new
“ sentiment awoke in my heart, new chains were
“ wove around me, and my weak resolves were
“ well-nigh annihilated by a trembling fear of
“ forfeiting the love of the refined and gentle
“ Abu Amir. Ah, faithless Amina, that could
“ prefer even *his* love to the glorious faith that
“ promised thee immortality! Yet blame me
“ not, my child!—mayest thou never know the
“ greatness of my trial!—O blame not thy weak
“ parent, but rather think how much more need
“ she hath of thy prayers! My treacherous
“ heart persuaded me, that it was fear of pain-
“ ing him which smothered the whispers of my
“ conscience.—Alas! I know too well *now*, that
“ I had not strength to sacrifice my newly-foun
“ happiness on the shrine of duty. I became t
“ —and no other shared with me his tenderne
“ so far at least I was as a Christian bride.

“ often does my heart reproach me, that if I
“ had found courage to avow my principles, we
“ might together have worshipped at the same
“ altar ! But ever, when conscience urged me
“ to make the trial, my fears pictured me cast
“ off from his heart,—abhorred,—despised ; the
“ idea was too dreadful, and my spirit fainted
“ within me as I contemplated it. Sometimes I
“ spoke of the Christian faith, but the prejudices
“ of his race possessed the mind of Abu Amir,
“ he attributed to Christianity all the crimes of
“ Christendom.—Ah me ! I had not courage to
“ combat with his prejudices.

“ And I was so happy in my new home !—so
“ fully blest,—that reflection seldom found me !
“ The hours flew by on the wings of angels, and
“ brought only a succession of delight and peace.
“ I contented myself with endeavouring to instil
“ gradually into the mind of my beloved, the
“ sublime philosophy of the Gospel teachings ;
“ it found in his mind a congenial soil, and
“ content to see him imbibing unawares that

“splendid system of morality, I forgot that
“was all the while an unfaithful Christian.

“When I first became a mother, and be-
“with trembling apprehension the frail I
“that hung on mine, I could not rest un-
“had given to my first-born the sacred rite
“secured to him, in case the slender thre-
“his little life should break, a share in
“Promises. But so languid became my f-
“or so full my confidence, that from 1
“Azayda, I withheld the precious boon.
“thus, fearless of judgments, and insensibl-
“my great ingratitude, I continued delight
“pursuing my path of sunshine and flowers
“But the storm burst over me at last !
“Eternal is not mocked ! and my presump-
“and infidelity deprived my little ones of
“protection ! My first-born fell by the h-
“of an assassin, before mine own eyes,—
“Amina’s heart reproaches her that she he-
“was his destruction.

“Yet—can you believe it ?—I even now

“ Unequal to the task of unfolding to Abu Amir
“ my long-concealed and outraged faith. May
“ He who is all mercy pity, not condemn my
“ weakness—and the plenitude of my Saviour’s
“ sacrifice cover even such sins as mine ! Re-
“ pentance is all that remains to me, and to
“ implore for thee the gift of faith, which I am
“ unworthy to impart,—and the grace to
“ win, by humility and self-distrust, what I
“ lost by too assured a confidence in mine own
“ strength.

“ I trust thou wilt have been compelled to
“ find a Christian to read to thee this scroll, for
“ I endeavour to trace it in the tongue taught
“ me by my earliest friend, and called by her
“ the venerable language peculiar to the Univer-
“ sal Christian Church. I pray that the same
“ lips that read to thee these words, may un-
“ fold the truths thy mother believed so unwor-
“ thily, and may teach thee to offer daily
“ prayers for her who erred by weakness—not
“ by malice.

“ But above all things, my child, be mindful
“ of thy sire. A heart so gentle—so pure as
“ his, though it resist for a time, cannot, when
“ fully explained to him, reject the divine and
“ ennobling doctrines of the world’s Redeemer ;
“ —with the morality of those teachings he is
“ well acquainted, though he knows it not.
“ Behold, then, the duty imposed on thee by
“ thy dying mother ;—means will be given
“ thee, if thou askest them from above,—first
“ to confirm thyself, then to save thy sire.
“ Let not the inconsiderate levity of youth
“ divert thee from thy purpose. Be *thy* fate
“ *my* warning,—lest the cowardly fears that
“ deprived me of so grand a privilege, deter
“ thee also from earning it. The reward thou
“ wilt win is above all price,—worthy of count-
“ less sacrifices. I see its value now that this
“ world is receding from me for ever. Be strong
“ in Him who is the strength of the weak ;—
“ falter not, though years elapse without any
“ appearance of success. Let thy weapons be

“ prayer, and the example of a pure and blame-
“ less life,—and the aim and object of that life,
“ the conversion of Abu Amir. This is the
“ work to which thy mother calls thee,—listen
“ not heedlessly to the voice that speaks from
“ her tomb!—it is for thee to amend her mis-
“ takes,—to atone for her weakness, and to
“ earn the glorious reward she was unworthy to
“ obtain.”

The voice of Manuel ceased,—and it was
some moments ere Azayda, raising her bowed
face from her hands, said, as her tearful eyes
sought the skies, and her hands were firmly
clasped on her bosom: “I accept the trust,
O my mother! Azayda devotes herself to
the salvation of her sire! Thy sweetness and
gentle instructions, and remembered love, have
commenced the work, and by the blessing of the
Most High, thy child will complete it.”

“ My thoughts are a bewildered chaos of
astonishment, admiration, and gratitude!” ex-
claimed Manuel; “most wonderful are the deal-

ings of the Almighty with the children of love!"

"Give me thy advice, my best friend,—course shall I pursue?—if thou wouldst thou seek my sire, for the immediate fulfilment of promise, behold me ready."

"Not so, my child; thy mother wisely counsels thee to choose a fitting time;—let Nadir be dismissed,—I perceive he is as uncome to Abu Amir as to thee,—and then take the opportunity which will be appointed thee."

Ere Azayda could reply, the voice and steps of Houadir were heard:—the master and lady parted, and the lady joined her attendant. "My father awaits thee in thy mirador, O, Azayda, he craves thy immediate presence."

In a few moments the maiden, with elegant step, and beaming countenance, entered the presence of her father, who exclaimed as she approached him,—“Ah me! my child, it seems to me as I gaze on thee, that thy sweet mother

before me ;—the sunny radiance, the animated intelligence which formed the peculiar charm of her fairest face, even now deck thy countenance!”

A heavy sigh accompanied his words, and Azayda sinking on a low cushion at his feet, rested her folded hands on his knee, and looked inquiringly in his face without speaking. “I desire, my beloved child, to know thy determination respecting the young emir, who would fain carry thee with him to Grenada. Thou hast beheld him,—what sayest thou?”

“That I remain with thee, my father! I seek no society but thine,—the only change I require being a little more of thy presence.”

“I anticipated this reply—and in truth, Nadir Aben Paez pleases me not. His ungenerous selfishness hath no thought for another. Thou wouldst be but a neglected slave, in the harem of such a man. Ah, far be such a fate from the child of my Amina! In the hope that some generous feeling would save me the pain of disappointing him, I have many times spoken of

the trial it would be to me to part with my only child, but he is incapable of a thought which hath not his own gratification for its object, and is only impatient to return to the voluptuous delights of Grenada. However difficult to my yielding nature it may be, I now feel that I must no longer defer my painful duty,—and lo! even whilst I am speaking, has a thought occurred to me that may render it more easy. Thou knowest how incessant have been my efforts to avenge the murder of my son, and rid myself and thee of that ruthless enemy, from whose ferocious malevolence we are never secure. This day hopes of success have been awakened in my bosom; a messenger from one of the *juizes de fora*, of the Comarca of Guimareens, informs me that a Gitano is incarcerated in that city for some trifling offence, who answers the description of my foe. The few days' detention allotted to him will enable me to reach the place and identify him. I have explained the whole to my guest, and am urged by him not to omit the oppor-

tunity of accomplishing an object so long frustrated, and so important. At first I felt indignant that he did not offer to accompany me;—but now I rejoice that his indolent inactivity enables me to absent myself for a few days; since it gives me an opportunity of informing him by letter that my views with regard to thee are changed. So shall I be spared the mortification of witnessing the youth's disappointment."

"May Azayda never be undeserving of her father's condescending love!" exclaimed the maiden, reverently carrying his hand to her brow.—"And when does my sire propose to commence his journey?"

"To-morrow, my Peri! before day-break; for I am pressed to avoid delay. May the blessings of Allah meanwhile watch over my sweet child!"

Abu Amir arose.—"I must now join my guest. I grieve to disappoint him, but if he feel not for a father, he deserveth not my sympathy."

Azayda accompanied her sire across the saloon, and as they passed by the half-averted jalousies, they perceived the young emir reclining on a couch in the opposite hall, and beside him the erect and majestic figure of Manuel. Abu Amir paused a moment to contemplate the voluptuous attitude and heavy features of the indolent Moor, as he alternately conversed with the grave Christian, and languidly sipped his sherbet; then turning to regard the sweet countenance of his child, folded her to his bosom, and having touched her fair brow with his lips, left the apartment.

On the following morning, when Nadir awoke from his slumbers, one of his own slaves presented him with a billet. He read it with extreme emotion, and dashing it to the ground, gave vent to the feelings it had excited in a torrent of Moslem oaths and imprecations. His favourite attendant, who stood behind the couch, started at perceiving an agitation so unwonted in his indolent lord, whose love of ease usually

protected him from all violent passions. Not daring to interrupt him, however, he silently waited till the first ebullition of his anger had passed away.

"And is it for this," muttered Nadir, with a voice rendered hoarse by rage,—“for this that I am banished from the city of delights, my own luxurious Grenada?—dragged across two countries hostile to my race?—and immured in this odious quinta! Can it be possible that I am calmly informed of Abu Amir's determination to cheat me of my promised houri?—of his sudden decision that the long-promised contract cannot, after all, be ratified?”

"Some troublesome dream disturbs the lord of my heart!" said Habez, advancing: "suffer me to arouse thee, O Nadir! and dispel the illusion."

"'Tis no phantasm, Habez," replied the youth, rising from his couch, "but an insult to my house, which Ibrahim, my father, will know how to resent. Yes! I fully comprehend the

artifice of Abu Amir. He hath contrived a false pretext for withdrawing from his home, that he may escape my reproaches for his broken faith ;—for know, O Habez, that this vile scroll imparts to me his intention of refusing me his daughter !”

Habez, who had never seen his master so moved, observed,—“ Let not the son of the great Ibrahim Aben Paez grieve at losing the bride promised by his obscure kinsman ! Do not the emirs of Grenada contend for his alliance ? —the fairest maidens of the stately palaces of the Vega shall solace the happy Nadir for the loss of this homely damsel.”

“ Homely ! sayest thou ?—by the holy Kaaba, the promised houris are less beautiful ! ’Tis true, by heaven’s light ! for know, my faithful slave, that having in vain besought the aged Portuguese that cultures her garden to procure me a sight of my young bride, contrived to obtain the favour without his connivance ; and I swear to thee ! the courts o

the Alhambra might rejoice to contain a creature so bright and beautiful. I believed her mine, as surely as if already presented to me by her sire,—and lo ! Abu Amir pleads as an excuse for this vile wrong, that he cannot yet deprive himself of his only child. What absurdity ! As though he could not supply her place by converting her zenana into a harem, and so relieve the joyless existence of which he speaks.”

The slave—a low-browed and dark-featured being—approached closely to his master, and with a look of infinite meaning, whispered,—“ And is my lord content to be thus plundered of his promised bride ? ”

“ What matters my discontent ? I have no alternative but to fly to Grenada, and prevail on my father to compel this base Yusef's fulfilment of his promise.”

“ I see no reason why his young houri may not be the companion of thy flight. Doubtless she would be but too happy to exchange her

cold father, and this gloomy quinta, for a noble spouse and the terraces of Grenada. If thy slave might presume, he could suggest a means of leaving to Abu Amir the difficult task of procuring a redress of grievances ;—though when his daughter is lost to him, he will doubtless acquiesce in the appointment of destiny.”

Aben Paez threw himself on his couch, exclaiming : “ Proceed, unfold thy plan ;—the confidence of thy words augurs well for its feasibility.”

“ Nay, it has just sufficient difficulties to establish thy fame among the youths of Grenada ; without inflicting on thee weariness or doubt, suspense or toil.”

Long and secret was the whispered conference now held between Habez and his lord, the nature of which will appear in its consequences.

Azayda, as unsuspecting of evil in others as unconscious of it in her own guileless breast, sought Manuel, as usual, at the evening hour ; but their studies were brief, being interrupted

just as they had commenced, by the entrance of Houadir, who delivered to Azayda a sealed packet.

“ 'Tis a letter from my father,” exclaimed the maiden,—and, opening it, she read as follows:—

“ To Azayda, the beloved child of my heart.
“ —Thy father will be detained beyond his
“ expectations in this dull city, and he already
“ sighs for the society of his child. Come then
“ to his bosom under the courteous escort of
“ thy kinsman Nadir Aben Paez. Fear not to
“ obey my command; the journey is not diffi-
“ cult, and thy father requires it. The blessing
“ of Allah be with thee!”

The surprise of the maiden was excessive, but was far surpassed by her joy,—first to find that her presence was growing necessary to her father, which promised to facilitate the one great wish of her heart,—and secondly, that the desire she had long felt to see something more of God's fair world than the scenes she had beheld from her infancy, was at length to be gratified. The

contents of the letter, and the necessary commands respecting the preparations for the journey, in which the matron must necessarily accompany her, were soon imparted to the wondering Houadir,—and Azayda, turning to Manuel, who had meanwhile busied himself among the shrubs and flowers, placed in his hand the important missive.

The old man perused it attentively,—scrutinized it on all sides,—read it with redoubled earnestness ;—then looking anxiously at his young mistress, said : “ And what are thy thoughts respecting the proposed journey ? ”

“ It occasions me but one regret, that of foregoing for a time thy beloved instructions.”

Again Manuel slowly scanned each word and sentence that the scroll contained, then stood for awhile in an attitude of intense thought. Ere the silence was broken by either, Houadir once more approached. “ A messenger from the young emir hath brought the courteous greetings of his master, O fair Azayda, and in-

for^{ms} thee he hath just received a request from thy sire to attend thee to Guimarraens,—and he asks when it will be thy pleasure that he be ready with his slaves.”

“An hour’s delay will be sufficient to prepare for our departure. At the expiration of that time let my escort be ready, for Azayda will take no rest until she rejoice in the presence of her beloved parent.”

Houadir withdrew. The busy hour that followed was all bustle and preparation. Azayda found the excitement as delightful as it was novel, and joyous with the anticipations that crowded her inexperienced mind, found a delight she had never before known in superintending the arrangements necessary for her comfort and safety during the journey. Manuel moved among the busy slaves with an abstracted air,—neither aiding nor directing them; and at length placing himself in the vestibule, watched the gradual assembling of the cavalcade around the portal of the quinta.

There stood the richly caparisoned and fiery steeds of the Moor and his attendants, with two relays of led-horses to relieve them; sumpter mules also were there, for it escaped not Manuel that the emir was accompanied by all his baggage, as well as the whole of his attendants. To these soon came the elegant litiero of the lady, borne by mules, which were loaded with costly trappings; and followed by a similar vehicle, less lavishly adorned, for her maid, and two sets of mules to take the places of the others, when required.

Azayda remarked not, that none of her father's slaves were commanded to attend her. Ignorant of the world, and incapable of suspicion, she was satisfied that a sufficient escort was provided for her protection.

As Manuel attended the fair girl to her litiero, there was a tremour in his voice, and a bright spot on his aged cheek, which she had never before witnessed,—and in spite of the giddy joy so natural to a young being for the

rst time free from a life of restraint and solitude, tears gushed to her eyes as she remarked his faithful attachment. She bent forward her veiled head, as she took her seat in the litiero :

Bless me, my best friend !” she softly whispered : “ bless me ere I quit you ?”

“ May the watchful providence of God, and the guardianship of his holy angels, ever avert danger and alarm from thy path, my child !” said the old man in solemn but faltering tones.

Nadir Aben Paez gave the word to start ;—the *avalcade* moved on,—but it had scarce vanished from his sight when Manuel hastened to the tables, mounted one of the fleetest mules, and took his way towards Lisbon.

CHAPTER X.

" All gazing on that youth, whose coming seems
A light, a glory such as breaks in dreams ;
And every sword, as o'er the billows dim
The needle tracks the loadstar, following him."

Lallah Rookh.

It scarcely need be said, that it was of De Lacy Manuel was in quest, and he met him as before narrated, just as he commenced that important expedition, the precise object of which was unknown to him.

When with the two armed troopers they left Stephano and Hubert, they continued at a rapid rate to trace the cavalcade of the young emir. Nor tightened they the rein, until they descried it at a distance winding slowly along the northern road that led in the direction of the district of Entre Douro e Minhos, and to that

ancient city which, ere the rescue of Lisbon from the Moorish invader, had contained the principal residence of the early kings of Portugal.

And now, for the first time since commencing the expedition, De Lacy addressed his venerable conductor.—“As yet the emir’s course is unblameable;—tell me, my good Manuel, on what grounds didst thou doubt the genuineness of the billet?”

“On none, save vague and uncertain ones, effor;—but let us have patience, soon after day-break they will reach a road, which winding over the Serra da Estrella, gradually diverges in an easterly direction, and crosses the frontiers near Aldea da Murcella. Should they take that route, my doubts will be changed to certainty.”

“But thou dost not say what gave rise to those doubts.”

“The first cause of my misgivings was the extreme improbability of the command of my master, which imposed on his daughter so long and fatiguing a journey on so slight a pretext.

This induced me to scrutinize the letter carefully, and I fancied I detected several inaccuracies therein, and certain variations in the style from that of Abu Amir, with which I am well acquainted. I may indeed be judging wrongfully, —but I know that the young Moor received a packet from Abu Amir, by the hands of one of my master's slaves, some hours before this bill was delivered to my lady; and if, as I suspect, that letter contained a refusal of the alliance of Nadir Aben Paez, it is scarcely probable that he would be immediately afterwards requested (though a kinsman) to escort Azayda to Guimaraens. Not having, however, sufficient motive for preventing the departure of my young mistress, (although an attempt made on my own fidelity convinced me that the emir is capable of any villany,) I forbore to disturb her peace by imparting my suspicions; and satisfied with procuring thy aid to rescue the maiden if treachery appear, I have hope to turn the evil intended against its vile projector."

"How, good father?"

"By securing to Abu Amir a means of averting the consequence of his rash promise to his kinsman; since an attempt to despoil him of his child, will furnish ample reasons for rejecting the alliance."

"Thou sayest well, wise and faithful slave! surely for this service, thy master will present thee with thy freedom!"

"He hath thrice offered it me, señor; but I have declined the boon."

"Is it possible? Art thou then in love with slavery?"

"It was willingly incurred, and is willingly borne;—but enough of this. The shades of evening are growing deeper, we may without fear approach nigher to our friends; and meanwhile, supposing (as I little doubt) the emir takes the eastern road, we shall do well to arrange the plan of rescue. The Moor hath twelve slaves, besides that dark-browed confidant, who is ever by his side; we are but four, and myself useless where

strength is needed. Prudence must come to aid of courage, or we may yet fail."

"Speak not of numbers," exclaimed De L "is not one Christian equal to ten unbelievers myself and two troopers fear not to under yon turbaned hounds."

They now quickened their pace for a time, lest by lengthening the distance between them, they should lose the Moor's party in coming darkness. Then holding a whispering consultation, their plans for the rescue were arranged, as to prevent Azayda's safety depending entirely on the success of the struggle though neither apprehended that Nadir Paez would render the conflict desperate.

The few short hours of gloom soon passed and as dawn approached, the Christians fell back, and at a distance rested, and refreshed themselves and cattle, whilst the emir's having found a convenient spot a little from the main road, made an exchange of horses and mules, and deliberately partook of

morning meal. Nadir felt no apprehension of pursuit, and was too much attached to his selfish indulgences, to submit to any great infringement of his usual habits. He broke his fast by the aid of the usual delicacies which he had been careful to provide in a well-stored cresset, and exacted from his slaves their accustomed tendance. At least two hours were thus wasted, which Azayda, regretting the delay, spent in the litiero, where she took her slight respite; little dreaming the while, how welcome as that pause to the faithful friends, to whose labours it gave a rest that had now become desirable.

Ere noon Nadir Aben Paez arrived at the diverging road, which so gradually bent towards the east that the change of route was scarcely perceptible; and a look of triumph was exchanged between the emir and his confidant, as they found it unremarked by their fair charge.

Manuel and De Lacy noted it, however, with throbbing hearts, and addressed themselves to

careful preparations for the fray that must follow. Gladly did they perceive the cavalcade halt two hours before noon, in a spot too hot to be passed, at such a time, by the fast Nadir. And good cause had they to reject the Moor's love of ease ; relieving them, did, of their chief apprehension, that their horses would be over-wearied ere the storm arrived.

But Aben Paez loved not the heats of summer, nor thought of resuming his journey until the breezes begun to sigh among the waving branches of a cork-tree grove, beneath the shade of which he had taken his siesta.

They were now entering the Serra d'Estremadura, and in a few hours became involved in its fastnesses and rugged acclivities. But the longed pauses, joined to the slow pace of the mule-litiero, caused their journey to be longer than Manuel had predicted ; and it was sunset when they descried a nestling in a sheltered nook of the hills, and surrounded by some straggling

varas of cultivated land,—an oasis in the wilderness,—the white-walled convent of Santa Maria.

It was situated considerably below the travelers, in a valley sheltered on one side by the sterile Cantaro Magro, and shut in on the other by the towering heights of the Espinhasso de Cao.

No sooner did the litiero of Azayda arrive at the point nearest to the convent gates, than De Lacy and his companions were beside it ; and the knight, commanding the men who led the mules to stop, called aloud to Aben Paez, who rode at the head of the cavalcade.—“ How is this, Sir Paynim,” he shouted,—and his voice echoed with startling clearness among the rugged cliffs that surrounded them ;—“ didst thou not undertake to convey the fair daughter of Yusef Abu Amir to the city of Guimarraens ?—what brings thee thus nigh to the frontiers ?”

The sound of his voice, the import of his words, caused Azayda to gaze anxiously towards

the strangers ; with amazement she beheld wise friend Manuel, who explained in few words her danger, and pointed out the convent as a place of refuge. By his aid she sprang from the litiero, almost ere De Lacy's challenge had reached his lips ; and followed by the terrified Horatio who understood nothing of the sudden conflict that surrounded them, clung to the old man and led her towards the abode of the holy sequestered hood.

Meanwhile De Lacy had placed himself between them and Nadir, who had now wheeled his horse to ascertain the cause of the unexpected interruption, and as he rushed towards the Christian knight, exclaimed,—“ Who art thou that darest question me ?”

No time was given for a reply, for obeying the signal, the whole of the Moor's attendants instantly charged, with him, the three Christian defenders of the path taken by the fugitive.

De Lacy but once found leisure fully to estimate his prodigious strength,—but that terrific

fell on the helmet of the cunning Habez, and clove it to the nether jaw ! The activity of his assailants prevented a repetition of the dreadful feat, and more anxious for Azayda's safety than the destruction of his foes, he continued defending himself and steed from the countless blows that were showered around him, and slowly retreating the while towards the convent ; shouting as he did so, in clear and ringing tones, his battle-cry,—“ St. George for the De Lacy !”

The road leading to the convent was very narrow, and formed a precipitous and uneven descent. Frequently the feet of the horses, as they backed before the assailants, slipped over the rocky surface, or stumbled against an abrupt projection. As the destrier of De Lacy with difficulty recovered himself from some such accident, the heavy blow of a mace aimed at his rider, struck the animal on the brow, and he sunk heavily to the ground. The knight sprang from him as he fell, and thus avoided being crushed beneath

him, but the horse of one of the troopers, who also was retreating as he beat off the Moors, stumbled over the prostrate steed, lost his footing, and rolled down the declivity. A shout from the Paynims proclaimed that they saw their advantage, and they pressed with redoubled eagerness on the dismounted knight and his sole companion. De Lacy, who had never before splintered a Moslem lance, had by this time discovered that he had greatly undervalued both the skill and bravery of his foes, in neither of which were the Spanish Moors excelled by the noblest chivalry of Christendom. He and his remaining trooper, however, achieved wonders; twice was the steed of Nadir slain, and as often renewed,—himself and several of his followers were wounded—Habez slain; but no gallantry could long withstand the numbers and perseverance of the foe. De Lacy cast a wistful glance towards the convent, which Azayda had just reached, and he rallied all his energies to secure for her the few moments now alone neces-

sary to place her in safety. His voice cheered his gallant follower, as he shouted again the battle-cry which had carried terror over many a hardly contested field.

The echo yet lingered among the hills when the tramp of horses' feet reached the ears of the combatants; a youthful voice, too, shouted,—“ ’Tis De Lacy's battle-cry! To the rescue!—to the rescue!”—and several lances, led by a knight completely armed, assailed the rear of the Moors.

No sooner did they turn to defend themselves, than their new assailants opened a passage for them through which they were glad to pass,—and De Lacy and his wearied soldiers were joined by their unknown friends. Nadir's fiery nature had for once completely overcome the indolence grafted upon it by his life of luxurious ease; and although he saw his lost prize enter her place of refuge, he burned to avenge his slain confidant, and defeated enterprize. He hastily re-formed his men, and renewed

the conflict, the issue of which continued doubtful, for the Moors still outnumbered the foes, and had the advantage too of their superior position. De Lacy's armour was much hacked, and in many places the blood trickled down it; one of his men remained stunned and severely bruised at the foot of the hill, and the brunt of the battle was now borne by the black knight and his followers.

The subtle edge of the crooked Damascus blades formed many a chink in the armour of the troopers, and even the page who gallantly fought beside De Lacy, owed his life to the jassareen, or coat of linked mail, which he wore beneath his satin vest. On a sudden a signal from Nadir drew off his men; he hastily formed them in two lines, and riding in front of them, uttered a few fiery words calculated to rouse every dormant spark of hatred that slumbered in their bosoms. The Christians comprehended the movement, and drew closer in a firm line to receive the onset; but there was not one who did not think of the while of the steep and slippery descent behind

him. The lips of Nadir were parted to utter the signal for the charge, when the convent bell tolled rapidly; and so near and loud was the sonorous peal, that the Moors paused,—gazed anxiously around them,—suddenly wheeled about,—and galloped towards the mules and attendants awaiting them in the road. Fearing some coming evil, the Christians remained motionless, and in a few moments beheld the infidels lead off their laden beasts in confused haste towards the east. No longer doubting that they were delivered from the foe, they advanced to reconnoitre, and soon perceived the cause of their flight. A company of lances was descending the path by which the black knight had joined De Lacy, and Don Pedro, as they approached, recognised, by the silver shield and bearing of the knight who led them, Don Bernardos de Mascarenhos, the captain of the queen's guard. The three knights exchanged greetings—for further disguise was now impossible to Don Pedro; and the squire who had, under the name of Gaspar, atten-

ded him, displayed beneath his raised vizor the bronzed features of the prince's well-known chamberlain, Don Gaspar de Carvelhao.

A vast accession of visitors had the mountain convent on that day, for Donna Inez and her attendants soon reached the hospitable dwelling. Mascarenhos, having caused his men to inter the four Moors who had been slain in the skirmish, placed a guard around the convent, and dismissed the remainder of the troops (excepting such as beingwounded had a claim on the good offices of the sisterhood) to a Benedictine priory a few hours' journey to the southward. With the latter went Don Pedro and his sole attendant, but entered not the priory. Intent on preventing the evil which he felt sure d'Ercilia was working for himself and Donna Inez at the palace, he without pause took the nearest route to the capital.

But we must return to the moment when Azayda with her attendants reached the convent. The short pause that necessarily occurred ere

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obtaining admission, appeared to her an age ; yet, when the portal was at length opened, she turned, ere entering, to obtain a glimpse of the scene of the affray. The situation of the combatants instantly checked her steps. De Lacy, unhorsed, was with his single trooper maintaining his difficult ground against the attack of the Moors, who knew how to make the fullest advantage of their superior position. A faint cry of horror burst from the pale lips of the maiden.

“What wouldst thou ?” exclaimed Manuel, as, turning from the refuge she had sought so eagerly, she attempted to retrace her steps.

“Oh Allah ! my preserver perishes, and I am powerless to aid him.”

“Not so, my child—within this house of peace, God’s altar stands, before which thou mayest offer prayers that will far more assist thy friends, than could any earthly power.”

“Oh ! lead me, lead me thither,” she eagerly replied.—“Yes, there, at least, I may afford him succour, though myself weak and helpless !”

Massive bolts and bars were instantly drawn between Azayda and the faithful friends who were risking liberty and life in her defence, and the youthful portress learning in a few words the fearful emergency which had thrown so unwonted a fugitive on the hospitality of the sisterhood, quickened her usually calm and deliberate steps, as she led the way across a narrow but lengthened cloister to the little chapel. Scarcely had the strangers crossed the threshold, ere a strange and heavenly harmony came forth to meet them, taking all that was earthly from their hopes and fears. At first faint and low, but swelling into full harmony as they advanced, till one of the wide doors of the chapel being opened for their admission, it greeted them with a full tide of sweet and holy sounds that not only astonished the Moorish maiden, but steeped her innocent soul in a new and wondrous rapture, partly formed of awe, and partly of joyous hopefulness. At the very threshold of the small temple Manuel knelt down, and Azayda placing herself

beside him, reverently raised her eyes towards the symbol that from above the entrance of the choir, reminded her of the vast and boundless love that had called her from the very bosom of infidelity ! Beyond this, she dimly descried through clouds of fragrance, the gem-like hues of storied windows, the glitter of tapers, and the bowed and veiled forms whose mingled voices breathed the sweet vespers hymn. But one glance, however, gave she within the screen, where all was to her inexplicable ; the sacred symbol above it she could not misunderstand, and to the ever-extended mercy of which it reminded her, she hastened to confide her friends. And ever as she murmured her simple prayer, the sweet responsive voices of the sisterhood died away, and again and again took up the solemn strain, till the air above and around her seemed charged with holiest words ; and the soul of the young neophyte insensibly forgot its terrors, and became soothed to calm trustfulness.

Soon, however, the pause became prolonged, a perfect stillness fell upon the worship, and as Azayda raised her head, the clouds of incense rolled away, and she began to distinguish the sacred altar and its symbolical adornments.

The bald brow and snow-white hair, and the robes of the celebrant, also became revealed only for a moment;—he and his attendants retired, and one of the sisters also quitted the sanctuary, and walked slowly down the aisle. Azayda raised her timid eyes as the grave sister passed her by, eager to scan the face of one of the community on whose hospitality her father so strangely cast her. And such holy and so sweet benevolence read she there, that she sighed when it disappeared, and thought the step of the sister bore her swiftly past. At that moment and the large bell of the convent loudly tolled, and of the few peasants who knelt in the small nave, the greater part with noiseless steps withdrew. But Manuel continued kneeling, and Azayda awaited his bidding, and Ho

amazed and bewildered, crouched beside her mistress.

And at length there was a stir in the choir—the sisters were leaving the stalls, and first kneeling reverently before the altar, quitted the sanctuary in pairs. From behind her veil, the Moorish maiden scanned them as they passed, and read with delight in every face the same calm expression of tranquil happiness.

There were white-veiled novices in the first bloom of youth,—some in the prime, others in the decline of life,—and a few who, bending with age and infirmities, required, to sustain their feeble steps, external aid ;—yet on none had care set his withering hand. Dissimilarity of feature was not wanting,—for whilst some might have served for models of female beauty and dignity of mien, the features of others were homely, or ill-formed ; yet how unlike were they to the haggard, coarse, and unlovely countenances we meet with in the world ! Azayda knew it not, for to her the world was unknown,—but she be-

neither vanity nor affectation,—and a crowd of faces that, however moulded, invited her to confidence and affection. With a joyous spirit she obeyed the signal of a lay-sister, and followed with Manuel and Houadir into an adjacent cloister.

But it was not till the last flutter of her dress had disappeared, that the curious gaze of the village matrons (who, attracted by the singular appearance of the strangers, had loitered by the side of their companions) was satisfied. Then looking significantly at each other, they silently withdrew, nor till they had left the precincts of the chapel ventured to whisper—“’Tis a Madam, —I know by her brodered slipper and flowing veil. What thinkest thou, Rose?”

asure. "If she only seek a day's repose, be
re she will be welcome! But—Holy Virgin!
hat have we here?"

Well might the few peasants who assisted at
e evening office of the convent, pause as they
itted the little postern, and gathering into
all groups whisper countless surmises, and
me few fears; for the house of peace was sur-
unded by armed troopers, and knights and
ges, and the litters of ladyes fair were awaiting
mission at its portal. Scarcely had entrance
en obtained by some, and others ridden hastily
ray, and a guard been carefully placed around
e lonely dwelling, when a single horseman,
ith one mounted attendant, both evidently
loors, galloped down the valley, and having
ached the gate of the convent, impatiently
manded admission. The quiet portress could
arcely catch his eager words.—"A messenger
om a trusty slave, warned me, ere day-break,
at my child was being led from her home.
e also assured me that measures had been

taken to circumvent the robber, and place her in safety here.—Was it not so?" he asked his follower.

"Even so did Manuel give me his commands," replied the slave, with a low obeisance.

"Answer me!" continued the impatient father—"is my child safe?" A few low words from the portress followed, and the twain entered the court of the convent. In a few moments, however, they reissued, followed by two curtained litters, and an aged man mounted on a mule. A Christian knight, also, whose hacked armour, and shorn plume, and flushed countenance (for his casque was raised) bore evidence of the recent affray, accompanied them; and the Moor addressed him several times with friendly, and almost affectionate courtesy.

But the glance of the youth ever wandered towards one of the litters, and after bidding adieu to the Moor, he addressed the aged follower with some bitterness. It is but a slight courtesy I ask,—and that not as a guerdon, for

I scorn to seek reward for aiding a lady in her peril,—but it is refused me. Is there no way of hearing those sweet lips say farewell? I leave Portugal—perhaps for ever—ere another moon, and this wanes apace!”

“It is best as it is,” replied the grave old man.

“Why, what evil would there be in hearing her say, adieu? Her slightest word were to me a benison!”

“Granting that in some cases the thing were indifferent,—in the present it would be a grievous crime.”

“How so?”—“Because contrary to a father’s commands, who must be obeyed in all that is not sinful.”

“And didst thou do well in causing her to be so soon snatched from Christian society?—Ah me! had Azayda remained here a little longer, perchance—”

“Forbear, young man! and rather than censure my judgment, consider whether I was

not bound to omit no means of restoring to her parent! Be thou satisfied, and Heaven's will!"

Manuel's solemn voice hushed the one that sought to reply: he waved his hand, and followed his companions—the young knight while standing with folded arms, gazing at the party and their escort of troopers, grand-master Mascarenhos, until they had quitted him.

Long after he had been admitted into the infirmary of the convent, a few peasants continued to linger near, fearful that some evil might befall the community, so dear to the whole island over which their humanizing influence extended. But no sound broke again upon the quietude of the lonely glen, save the measured tramp of the sentinel, or the exchanged greeting with the rounds were made.

CHAPTER XI.

"The sly, insinuating, serpent-souls,
That wind about the meanness of mankind ;—
'Tis they, with lying blandness on the lips,
Whose tuneful flattery, that, cloyless sweet,
Can still the gusty tempers of the proud
To fond subjection, and the vain enchant
To patrons blind."

Montgomery.

In his cabinet, on the day of Azayda's deliverance from the emir, sat the Count d'Ercilia, in an attitude of deep thought.

It was that calm hour that precedes sunset, when the sun, streaming across the level lands, renews the earth with lengthened shadows, producing a quivering struggle betwixt light and shade; when brightly reflected from the higher ridges, and crowning with dazzling splendour the peaks of the highest mountains, all its glories

proaching night. All this might be noted from the open window of that chamber, but by the dark spirit brooding all lovely and innocent things were disorviewed with a scowl, as, insensible all charms of nature and the luxuries that surrounded him, he continued to ponder in thoughtfulness. Exclamations and in words burst occasionally from his lips, passion that agitated his soul chafing it in his words became gradually more connect length he gave way, in a continued strain to the feelings that tortured his bosom : he muttered, " thou hast been fooled, Caelho !—deceived—duped—outwitted ! plans have been crossed,—thy schemes fr

cant to weigh against thee in the councils of the state. Aye, and he hath stood quietly by, wrapped in his cunning disguise, and laughed to see thee waste thy fury on the thick-skulled Islander!—hath complacently beheld his proxy receive the weight of thy vengeance, whilst himself, the real foe, quietly and at leisure wove his plots around thee! Madman! Fool that I was! not to detect him when he took Inez from my side in the barge!—blinded by my own sagacity, which believed my enemy discovered in the bull-slayer! So! the moral—the *wedded* Pedro—hath a favourite among the maidens of the queen! Well, indeed, have they kept their secret, but they shall find it hath been kept in vain.

“ And are, then, my long-nursed hopes at an end? Doth no chance remain of my securing, by means of this marriage, that brilliant retreat in Spain, which the lavish waste of my expenditure, and the daily increasing risk of my position here, render so necessary to my safety? My Cas-

tilian ally is eager to receive me, and promis-
 me the patrimony of Inez, if I accede to h-
 wishes. But the hand of its heiress must gi-
 colour to such a step, or the secret service b-
 which I earn it may be guessed. By my father-'s
 soul! the plan was well contrived,—it mu-
 have succeeded, but for this meddling prince!
 My curses on him and his!

“ But he *shall not* triumph!—No; by heaven!
 either I will foil him, or my revenge shall be
 marvel to succeeding ages! But why think
 vengeance? I must not yet succumb,—the pri-
 is too great—too necessary to my safety—to
 given up whilst a shadow of hope remains. Yes
 ’twould be madness in me to forget that with th-
 the successor of Alphonso I may not breathe th-
 same air! My last reliance is on my influenc-
 with the king; already have I placed my fligh-
 with Donna Inez in the light in which I wis-
 him to view it,—and have spread whispers roun-
 the court that may aid my future plans. So fa-
 only can I advance at present; but patience,—
 a little patience,—and all may yet be well

There are my precious confidants, too,—Gonzalez and Pacheco,—little do they guess my plans! though, poor, simple fools! believing themselves deep in my secrets! Ha, ha!—well—they *do* share such as suits my purpose to confide to them—such only! And now for the steps which must be taken immediately;—to these must all my energies be for the present bent. My more lawful, but less pressing claims may wait awhile; but my convenient and merry rogues, the swarth Gitani, must have their recompense, or I lose their future services. For these I have no available means, for I depended with considerable reliance on the dower of my bride. My hottest malison on him who hath circumvented me! Well! I must to the Jew—and as I have no more bonds to give, and the need is pressing,—and he hath golden stores, I well know, in his secret cells,—what he will not yield me for love, he must e'en yield me for fear. Nought remains, but that I possess myself of some of his hoards, come what come may! Ha!—I hear the signal,—they are here!”

A low hollow tap, twice repeated, son within the chamber. Caelho approached secret door, and received into the apartment three worthy associates, Hamet, Cloton, Gheran.

“ Well, my friends, you are punctual to appointment.”

“ We always are on these occasions,” Gheran, grinning as was his wont.

“ Ah yes, I understand thee—witty rogue—thou alludest to the payment of the reward. It shall be forthcoming; but I wish you attend me into the city, whither I am going to receive it for ye. An old villain dwells there, an enemy to all liberality, and such gay language as renders us nobles lavish to our retainers. The withered miser hath good store of gold, which will, I foresee, be one day mine

res. If I find him practicable, all will be well; it if, self-willed and besotted to his vile passion, I accept not my terms,—why, in that case, we must even constrain him to listen to reason. So all ye pay yourselves from his coffers, with each addition as may content ye for this further service. What say ye ?”

The glistening eyes of the Gitani exchanged quiet glances,—but they expressed their willingness to do the bidding of the tempter ;—and concealing his form within a capacious cloak, Caelho led the way through a small door, and disappeared with his swart followers.

At early dawn the following day, the Count Ercilia was favoured by the king with one of those private interviews which frequently preceded the council of state. Some agitating topic was the subject of their discourse, for the hair of Alphonso was vacant, and he with a flushed countenance paced the room with rapid strides, whilst Caelho stood in an obsequious attitude near a small table beside the royal seat, on

which were strewn various parchments. .
countenance of the Conceira Mor was de
with the unchanging smile, which was the
guise it wore in the presence of his royal ma

“ Well ! thou *hast* cause to complain !”

Alphonso, pausing near the dissembler,—“
if Pedro must needs forget his duty to Const
none other could suit his wayward fancies
thy long-promised bride !”

“ Nay, my gracious liege,—I do not so
regret the loss of this artful woman as I
her influence with the Infant. Should she art
establish her dominion over his mind, we
Portugal !—for the Castilian policy will
rule her destinies !”

“ Have we not said Pedro shall be warne
she is no Circe, to change his nature by a n
draught !”

and of our royal house, hurries thee too far, señor ;—towards his young wife the Infant hath never displayed the utmost respect,—her influence alone may therefore counteract an infatuation that can be but temporary.”

“Alas !” replied Caelho, “who has not marked with apprehension the extreme delicacy of the Infanta ! Suppose she should sink under the trial, now so nigh at hand ! It needs but little insight to guess that the infant heir of the great Alphonso’s throne, would soon have a harsh step-mother in this supercilious stranger, since even at so interesting a moment she can lure Don Pedro from the side of his gentle consort !”

“By heavens !” exclaimed Alphonso, “thy words torture me ! The Infant of Portugal wed the child of a Castilian fugitive ! Surely the wildest dreams of this haughty damsel could never aim at such a mark ! Yet is there much unrewd foresight in thy suggestion. But we will circumvent this ambitious woman !—we will

at once banish her from the court and from the kingdom.—Yes, the queen shall instantly know how insidiously is the honour of the Infante threatened, and the peace of his consort.”

“As Alphonso, following the impulse of his impetuous nature, hastened towards the door, d'Ercilia ventured to detain him, saying,—“May thy servant, O gracious sovereign, whose zeal for the honour of thy house, and the future welfare of his country, obliterates the remembrance of the indignities heaped upon himself,—may he venture to suggest once more his poor thoughts?”

“Speak, good Caelho! thou art ever prompt to detect, and ingenious to avert, aught of danger or difficulty that menaces us.”

“I would propose that a more effectual bar be placed between the prince and this fair stranger, than distance or banishment,—which, instead of preventing their meeting, would but increase the power of this enslaver; for doth not an occasional absence preserve to affection its

earliest warmth and tenderness? If the king would effectually preserve his heir from this wily syren,—let him place the prohibitions of the church between them. To wed her would then be impossible,—and the very pride that raised the hopes of Donna Inez so high, would probably enable her to disdain a love that could bring her only dishonour.”

“What meanest thou?” exclaimed Alphonso, —“on what pretext could we hope to prevail on the holy see to forbid our son’s alliance with the Castilian?”

“Such extreme measure is not needful,—the simple will of Alphonso can fully effect his purpose.”

“Speak in distinct terms,” said the king, frowning with impatience;—“explain at once thy meaning.”

“I obey, my liege;—this expected prince, whose birth makes Don Pedro a father,—if (which Heaven grant!) the royal infant live,—will need sponsors.”

“Certainly,—what then?”

“Let not my suggestion displease my—but if the king should command Donn to stand as godmother to that child, on pretext could she refuse the honour? Ye an act would place an eternal barrier between her and its father.” D’Ercilia, pausing, a deep breath, as if even to his practised some relief was necessary in that moment of intense suspense.

“Now dost thou surpass thyself. Caelho exclaimed the king,—his face glowing with sudden triumph. “So! we comprehend and thou art right! She could not decline her honour so envied without betraying her hopes.—It shall be so! and now have we to pray for the life of this unborn babe; for the surety, if its mother were the only obstacle to the proud girl’s ambition, the failing health of the Infanta threatens to remove it ere long

“Caelho again breathed calmly,—and I with deep reverence, to conceal the mal-

joy that lit up his features, he said,—“I have yet a few remarks to submit (with permission) to my liege lord.”

“Let us hear thee, in heaven’s name!—though thou wilt scarce improve upon thy last suggestion.”

“’Tis simply this, my liege,—that it will be well not to trouble the queen with doubts respecting her attendant. I confess, my weakness is such, that, notwithstanding my wrongs, I were loth to see one I have so long loved, dismissed with disgrace from the court, which would be inevitably the case, should her royal mistress suspect her design on the prince. Such an act, too, beside the danger I have before assigned to it, would deprive me of hopes which I confess still cling to my heart. Yes, I will not hesitate to avow to my sovereign, that could I behold Donna Inez cured of her too aspiring thoughts, I would, even now, from respect to the good knight her father, and urged by the lingering fondness so long by his sanction cherished,

forget her errors, and receive her to my confidence and affection."

"Thou art a fond fool, Caelho,—a fond, generous fool,—and, like many another good man, wilt be duped by this sybil, an' thou take not better heed."

"Nevertheless, I would at least preserve to her the protection of the queen, were it only to save her from the consequence of her own weak vanity. May I hope the king will grant this request?"

"As thou wilt, as thou wilt!" replied Alphonso, evidently annoyed at what he believed the excessive weakness of his favourite. "And now," he continued, resuming his chair, and pointing to the parchment on the table, "the hour of council is at hand,—we would be prepared to meet our advisers." The count perceived that his royal master's patience had reached its limits, and promptly adapting himself to the sudden change, was soon deep in the mazes of a bold but tortuous policy.

A far different interview from that we have just described was at the same time taking place in the queen's bower, whither Don Pedro had hastened immediately on his arrival at the palace. The grave reproof that sat on his mother's placid brow, admonished the Infant that his enemy had been at work ; but without remarking the altered manner of his reception, he craved a private and immediate interview, and in as brief words as possible, narrated the whole of the incidents in which he had served Donna Inez. The queen listened at first with cold displeasure, but soon became interested in the narrative, and as the deep villany of Caelho was more distinctly revealed, her wonted confidence in her son returned, and was soon followed by warm approval of his conduct.

But the eyes of the royal mother had closely scanned Don Pedro's expressive countenance during the recital, and when it ceased, she said, —“And now, my son, there is one doubt that lies heavily at my heart, and from which I would

fain thou shouldst relieve me. Refuse not to answer me, and I will not hesitate to rely on thy candour.—With what sentiments dost *thou* regard this unhappy maiden, to whose preservation thou hast so long devoted thy powerful energies ?”

There was a prolonged pause,—the prince buried his head in his hands, and Donna Beatrice with a countenance all anxiety and apprehension regarded him in silence.

“ Well dost thou know, my mother,” at length he murmured, “ thy unbounded influence over the heart of Pedro, and safely reliest on one who hath never yet concealed a thought from thee !—nor will he now :—thy inquiry, so distinctly made, shall be answered as best I may.—With what feeling doth the wrecked mariner behold the shores he may not reach ?—with what despair doth the fainting pilgrim espy, far off, the gushing stream he leaves untasted ? Oh my mother, when thou canst describe to me such feelings, then may I hope to picture mine for the beauteous stranger !”

“ Ah !” sighed the queen, “ my fears were too well founded,—alas ! my beloved son ! I would have wished thee spared so severe a trial ; but since ’tis ordained, endure it nobly, and never for a moment indulge a thought incompatible with the stainless innocence of the virtuous Inez.”

“ Señora !” exclaimed the prince, starting from his seat, and regarding the queen with a glance of fire,—“ canst thou believe that my affections resemble the Solano blast, which covers with blight and ruin what it lights upon ?”

The queen preserved her usual placid demeanour, as she replied,—“ Ah, my son, the weakness of thine own heart is unknown to thee,—trust it not too confidently, or it may betray thee irretrievably.”

“ Rather, dearest mother, its *strength* is by thee unguessed,” replied the prince, recovering his usual calm melancholy,—“ I pray thee forgive my petulance, and believe, that by deeming me capable of wronging, even in thought, the pure-

hearted girl, whom I have only sought to protect from an insidious and powerful foe, thou didst cruelly injure me. I cannot promise not to love, since my vacant heart—which revolted from my constrained vows from the moment I beheld my cold, unlovely bride—yearned for a mind of congenial tone, ere it knew the sweet excellence that has won its homage. No, forbid me not love my peerless Inez, and I promise thee it shall be the love of the blessed; undimmed by selfishness, or aught that could obscure but by a shadow her stainless loveliness! Surely this devotion can be no crime in me, no dishonour to its object,—since 'twill but incite to deeds of high renown, and acts of exalted virtue, such as alone could light up her radiant eye with an approving glance.”

“And Constanza,—thy wedded wife,—how wilt thou make thy duty to her accord with this romantic attachment?”

The enthusiastic glow that had lit up the fine

Features of the royal youth, faded, as with a heavy sigh he replied: "Such cold regard as she is capable of, 'tis not difficult to return;—and the duties exacted by my enforced vow I am fain to fulfil. Of nought will I rob her save my thoughts,—I ask not to hear the voice of Donna Inez, or gaze—as others may do, without a crime—upon her star-like beauty!"

"Methinks the lady's absence from the court, at least for a time, will soonest restore thee to freedom."

"Oh, not for worlds!—if my peace be dear to thee, harbour not such a thought. Rather fling thou, O queen, still closer around the maiden, the protecting shield of thy love and kindness; so shall I less anxiously and constantly be watching over her safety, and my mind escape the torturing fears that would assail me were she removed from thy guardianship. Thou mayst believe me, for I speak from the bitter experience of that time, when I had lost all trace of the exiles."

With a heavy sigh the queen replied,—
“Alas! I am most unhappy in both my children! although in worth and excellence each contents my heart. Thy sister, my sweet Maria, is trembling lest the king be inexorable in his designed negotiation for her marriage. Her pure and contemplative mind turns with disgust from the hollow vanities, empty joys, and ceaseless cares of this weary world, and yearns for the peaceful duties of the cloister. Ah me! how powerless am I! who cannot ensure for one of my virtuous children, even a moderate share of earthly blessings! But far be murmurs from my lips,—only let me see each carry with resignation the cross assigned, and your mother will do her utmost to bear it with you. The aid of my poor prayers ye both have. Alas! in nought beside, can my anxious love avail ye!”

“Sweetest mother!” exclaimed Pedro, raising her hand to his lips,—“we have indeed our appointed trials, and must wrestle with them as best we may;—but wouldst thou that we were

exceptions to the common lot of humanity, passing through life exempt from sorrows?"

"I thank thee, my son; thou hast pointed out mine own weakness."

"'Twas only to recall thy wonted strength.—Adieu—'tis the hour in which the council meets; and there, before the assembled nobles, and the king himself, will I denounce this perfidious dastard,—this unworthy knight,—Caelho!"

"Stop, my son," replied the queen—"whither wouldst thou?"

"To deliver the king from the dark influence of this vile sycophant."

"What, by the history of his attempt on the Castilian lady?"

"Even so."

"Ah, far other effects would follow such a step. This day's experience convinces me that the craft of the old serpent dwells in that powerful noble, and will prevent the king learning anything from thy tale, but thine own devotion to Donna Inez. On her will fall the whole

weight of his ire, and all thy efforts to avert or appease it, but add to its violence. Be patient, my son, a few years, and we shall have passed away,—time is fast sweeping our generation hence to make room for that which is to succeed us. Be patient, and trust in heaven,—certain, that though the wicked may appear for a time to triumph, their destruction must come at last; and the longer it is delayed, the more terrible the retribution.”

The habitual reverence of the prince for his mother's counsels, and his own conviction of Caelho's power over the mind of the sovereign, changed the intention of Don Pedro;—he bade the queen farewell, and with an altered purpose bent his steps towards the sala de consejo.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Who for the testimony of truth have borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence ;—for that was all their care,
To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds
Judged them perverse.”

AFTER a day of rest spent at the convent of the Carmelites, Donna Inez, escorted by the troops whom the queen had sent to her aid, and attended by her faithful page, Hernandez, returned to the palace.

They reached Lisbon ere sunset, and the whole cavalcade paused on a hill which overlooked the city, to feast their delighted eyes on a glorious prospect. It commanded the whole of that fair capital, which hath been called “ the

queen of cities whom the seas obey,"—the graceful sweep of her "golden Tagus,"—the verdant meadows that spread along its opposite shores,—and the distant heights of Almada,—the whole reposing beneath the slanting rays of a glorious summer sun.

As the party paused, and silently contemplated a scene seldom surpassed in any land, a sudden note of joy arose from the city. The peal of countless bells came up to them with a wild, exultant, and commingled sound, that was reiterated around them in repeated echoes.

"What means this triumphal peal?" asked the lady of Sosia, who was beside her.

"I am at a loss to conjecture, señora," replied the courtly page, "unless the city rejoices in the safe return of Donna Inez."

"Thou art a sad sycophant!" said Inez; then turning to Don Bernardos, who at the moment appeared on the other side of the *litiero*, the lady repeated her inquiry.

“In truth, señora, I came to obtain information,—for I feared my treacherous memory had deprived me of some festival.”

“Thou hast judged it wrongfully, or we are equally oblivious; but a few moments, thank heaven! will satisfy us.”

The cavalcade moved on. As they neared the city the joyous tumult became more distinct, and at length they distinguished shouts and exclamations that well-nigh rent the air, and overpowered the sonorous voices of the bells. Their course, however, led them not to Lisbon; and on diverging thence, the whole became confused and indistinct. As they proceeded, new surprises assailed the travellers; from the churches of the distant villages were wafted similar notes of joy,—and on approaching the palace, the musical bells of the queen's chapel rung forth a loud and merry peal. The heart of Inez beat in unison with the cheerfulness that filled the air, for she was now once more near to the few dear friends who

remained to her. She thought of her faithful Sanchiza, her royal benefactress, the tender Isabel, the gentle Clara,—and when Don Bernardo de Mascarenhos, with formal etiquette, delivered his beautiful charge, with her page, into the care of the officer on duty, she hastened to the quarter of the palace containing her own apartments, all delight and expectation.

Ere she reached her bower, Sanchiza welcomed her with tears of joy, the arms of her gentle friends encircled her; and countless questions and exclamations, more affectionate than coherent, were exchanged. By the time she was fairly seated, however, the first ardent congratulations being ended, the trio exclaimed, almost at the same moment,—“And what thinkest thou of the news?”

“What news?”

“Oh! heard ye not the ringing of the bells?”

“Certainly: but the meaning of their tumultuous peals I have yet to learn.”

“Know, then, the people are half mad with

joy, that a son is born to their darling, the Infant."

"Is it so, indeed? blessed be God for his precious boon!" replied Inez with earnestness.

The ladies exchanged glances, and Isabel continued, with some slight hesitation in her voice and manner: "And the royal mother,—she, also, is doing well."

"It could not be otherwise," observed Inez; "why should not a princess be as favoured by heaven as a peasant?"

"True," replied Clara, "but thou must hasten thy tiring, for we are here by the queen's command to bid thee to her presence immediately on thy arrival."

"I were undeserving her condescending kindness, if I wasted a moment in delay," said Inez, hastening to her toilet;—and whilst she dressed, she was fain to satisfy the curiosity of her fair friends, respecting the cause of her being disguised in peasant's garments; the homely robes being revealed by the removal of her capote.

In return the ladies described the fear which had induced them to send after her to the house of Donna Maria de Zibrieria, with all the terrors and anxieties which had harassed them on that dreadful night ; and Inez perceived that to the anxious love of her friends she owed the interposition of the Alchymist, and the timely arrival of Don Bernardos to the aid of Don Pedro and De Lacy.

They continued to converse, for each had much to say, until they reached the royal antechamber ; when, as became them, they assumed such quiet demeanour as became fair maids of honour.

They were all much surprised to find themselves, on approaching the queen, in the dreaded presence of Alphonso ; and Inez, led by her friends, knelt with some little trepidation before the sovereigns.

“ Rise, my child,” said the soft voice of the queen, “ we welcome thee back to our court, and our affections ; and much regret that any noble of our realm should so far forget the duties of

knigh**tly** courtesy, as to offer constraint to the inclination of a noble lady."

"**F**air damsels should be better taught than to disdain the honest love of a proved knight," added the king sternly. Inez timidly raised her eyes towards Alphonso in meek but uncontrollable surprise, and notwithstanding the dark concentration of his brows, would have replied, but he with a scornful voice exclaimed—"I, however, have nothing to do with such follies." No one ventured to reply, and, after a pause, the king coldly said,—“Thou hast doubtless heard, maiden, that a son is born to our royal house?”

“I pray God’s blessing may strengthen both child and mother!” replied Inez, with unfaltering accents.

The queen faintly smiled; and a glance of tender pity was in her eyes, for which Inez felt grateful, though she understood not why it was called forth.

The king continued,—“It is our purpose to do thee high honour, Donna Inez, by appointing

thee sponsor to our new-born grandson ;
thou any objection to undertake the office ?
Surprise now overcame every other feeling
the breast of Inez, who gazed from Alphonso
the queen, as though she would fain have a
word if she heard aright. " Answer me," said
the king sternly,—“ what hast thou to say to
my proposal ?”

“ If I mistake, my liege, pardon my presumption,—but believing thou commandest me
to bear the new-born prince to the font, what
reply can I give thee, save, that if I am deemed
worthy of such high honour, and important trust
I most willingly undertake its duties.”
The queen regarded Alphonso with a look of triumph
but his only reply was a contemptuous curl
of his haughty lip, as though he could still do
better. The ingenuous heart, though it vied in transparency
with the clear depths of the liege's
stream.

“ 'Tis well !” observed the king,—“ thou
therefore be in readiness to assist at the so-

e, which will take place to-morrow in the private chapel of the Infanta." Then turning abruptly to the queen, he continued: "I have much to call me hence, señora,—and must therefore, without further delay, take my leave."

The queen accompanied her royal consort to the door of her bower, and when she returned, and Inez surrounded by her young companions, were loading her with congratulations on her return, and endeavouring to obtain some account of her adventures. "A word with thee, my child," said Donna Beatrice, leading the way towards her oratory; and Inez extricating herself from her friends, obeyed the mild command. Long did the queen's maidens bend over their tapestry frame, ere that private conversation terminated; and once or twice when their low soft voices were for a moment hushed, they fancied the sound of stifled sobs came from the oratory. And that as it may, when the queen re-entered her bower, though she leaned her hand on the shoulder of Inez, (a mark of affection reserved

for those whom she distinguished with her most marked esteem,) some prying eyes were said to have remarked that the fair cheek of the Castilian was paler than was its wont, and her eyes dimmed as if by recent tears. Referring to her fatiguing journey, the queen released the maiden almost immediately from her attendance; graciously taking on herself the few preparations necessary to fit her for the solemnity of the morrow.

Brightly rose that morrow over Portugal, and thousands welcomed the day's arrival, which was to witness the spiritual birth of Ferdinand, the princely scion of the royal house of Braganza, and Lusitania's future king! It was ushered in like some glorious festival, by the glad pealing of exulting bells; and the citizens collected at an early hour around the palace of Don Pedro, to obtain a sight of the noble personages who were to witness the royal infant's regeneration. None were present at the sacred rite, save such as had some appointed duty, either as

Assistants or witnesses ; but these sufficed to fill the small chapel, for its ample chancel occupied one-half of its length.

At the western entrance paused the attendants of the royal babe, awaiting the solemn ceremony of his reception into the Christian community. And there (after having in solemn procession entered the sanctuary and knelt before the altar) came the mitred patriarch, with his coped prelates, and stoled priests, and choristers, and taper-bearing acolytes :—whilst at the head of all walked one who carried the splendid processional cross,—fit symbol to be presented to eyes that almost in the instant of first beholding the light, were blest with participation in the redemption it represented.

The introductory prayers and ceremonies being concluded in the porch of the temple, all moved to the baptistry, and collected around the font. The clergy and their assistants ranged themselves on one side, and on the other—extending to the extreme limits of the nave—stood the

royal and noble ladies. The immediate assistants at the solemn rite now drew to the centre of the brilliant throng; and amongst the most conspicuous of that group, stood the proxy of the illustrious godfather, and the noble lady whose duty it was to present the royal infant to the prelate, who had baptized his sire.

Many eyes were turned on Donna Inez, whose selection for so great an honour had excited the astonishment of all, and the uneasy jealousy of many; whilst those to whom the whispers so industriously circulated by Caelho had penetrated, wondered that she could hypocritically assume a look so calm and undisturbed, whilst about to take on herself a duty that rescued Don Pedro from her fascinations. To such,—and of their number was Alphonso,—her calmness indicated only a crafty and powerful mind, whilst to the fierce spirit who had expected to find this his hour of triumph, the meek joy that shone in the face of Inez, and the exultant tenderness with which she regarded

the royal infant as it nestled within her arms, was as a barbed dart entering his malignant soul, and goading it to fury. It was but too evident to him, that Inez was as unconscious of the barrier her act placed betwixt her and Pedro, as she was of any hopes that could have rendered it painful. Thus the queen too read, though with far different feelings, the ingenuous countenance of Inez; and her heart was in that hour drawn yet closer to the young orphan, whom she was bound, by a promise to her dying sire, to protect and cherish.

But there was yet another, whom we must pause to remark,—one on whose countenance fell many a curious glance. A paleness as of death shaded the features of Don Pedro, as he stood beside his royal father, and listened to the sweet voice making a profession of faith for his son, and undertaking in his name the indispensable duties of a Christian. The most untiring scrutiny failed to observe the eyes of Inez once turned towards the prince; she appeared, and

doubtless was, fully absorbed, and happy in her envied privilege ; and if sometimes the glance of Pedro dwelt with a melancholy tenderness on the beauteous being who carried to the font his new-born child, none but they whom envy had warped, could wonder that he should behold with admiration, loveliness so perfect and so innocent !

After the administration of the sacrament, the clergy retired as they had entered ; the royal babe, now a baptized Christian, was restored to his proper attendants, and the crowd who awaited without the palace, were gratified by beholding the departure of the sovereigns and their glittering train.

That day was one of festivity and rejoicing at the palace ; among the guests who were assembled there, Inez rejoiced to behold Sir Alfred de Lacy and the fair Edith. Having now no claim on her preference to fear, the young Englishman succeeded in pleasing the fair Castilian, and he, too, rejoiced in the opportunity of conversing with one who had seen his loved Azayda. Their

converse was so prolonged as to half arouse Caelho's old suspicions ;—but if any survived the moment, they were dispersed on the morrow, when Sir Alfred and Edith took leave of their royal entertainer, previously to their departure for England.

Soon did Inez feel the effects of the dark rumours which Caelho had industriously circulated ; sometimes in the biting sneers of little minds, wherein the low passions of envy and jealousy had been excited by her beauty and talents, or the favour the queen extended towards her ;—at others in the grave and well-meant warning of some stately dowager ;—not unfrequently, a hint was given with an incredulous air, by those pretending to disbelieve, but with a view to detect, by close scrutiny, thoughts which had no harbour in her bosom. In whatever form the scandal reached her, it inflicted exquisite pain, but the unvarying kindness of the queen enabled her to persevere in her resolve not to suffer any species of persecution

to drive her from her powerful protection. And the counsel of her director, to "live so, that her calumniators should not be believed," was perfectly successful; for when the most prying malice failed to discover aught which might give confirmation to the floating lie, it gradually died away; and every generous mind that had been induced to give it credit, endeavoured to make amends to her who had so meekly endured the wrong, by redoubled acts of kindness and attention.

But there were shrewd observers still, whose experienced eyes observed the virtuous struggle in secret battling within those young hearts, either interested with the queen in their eventual triumph, or with Alphonso regarding them with cold displeasure. We will hope that the age possessed but *one* who would gladly have crushed both noble spirits, could he thereby have ensured the success of his perfidious and selfish schemes.

At length the always delicate health of the Infanta visibly declined. For some time no one

ventured to remark it, but with the rapidity common to mortal decay in those climates, it soon mocked all the delicate flattery of courts, and the decease of Constanza was anticipated by all. And now Alphonso and his councillor congratulated themselves on their foresight; and Inez for the first time guessed from the broken hints of busy tongues, the motive which had selected her as a sponsor to the young Ferdinand. Pained by the deceitfulness of the king, though not scathed by his success, for she entertained no hopes it could blast; she found her young heart turning with disgust from the crooked ways of courts.

CHAPTER XIII.

Das Herz ist gestorben, die Welt ist leer,
Und weiter giebt sie dem Wunsche nichts mehr.
Du Heilige, rufe dein kind Zurück,
Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück,
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet."

Schiller.

THE glorious summer had passed away,—autumn and winter had followed; the court had spent the chilly months in Lisbon, and once more abandoned the city for the pure air of the suburban palace. And now the fervid sun was again tinting the luscious clusters of the vine, and ripening the plenteous harvest,—and the embrowned peasants were fain to repose beneath the umbrageous foliage of the oak or the chesnut during the noontide hour.

Over the Infanta the grave had long been

. She had moved among her contemporaries with the cold, unvarying apathy of one possessing neither thoughts, feelings, nor passions; as already forgotten,—or remembered only as an actor who hath tamely strutted through the world, and scarcely observed departed.

The morning, but few hours after dawn, the queen of Portugal sat within her airy bower, through the open lattices of which, the soft voices of singing-birds came in, with the fragrance of fragrant flowers that had never shrunk from the heat of the fierce noon. The low tinklings of the mountain which played upon a terrace extending beneath the windows, mingled with the hum of innumerable silken wings, which, sweeping over the dewy blossoms, vied with their various hues.

The young princess Maria and the queen's attendants were, as usual, collected around one of the ponderous frames, within which were hung the quaint and elaborate tapestries of the middle ages,—and a little apart from the

group was Donna Inez, bending over a manuscript which she was illuminating. The queen, aloof from all, sat silent and wrapped in thought; her gentle glance ever and anon regarding that graceful girl, who seldom suspended her persevering industry by raising her eyes from her beloved occupation.

"Thou art too devoted to thy exquisite art, Donna Inez," observed the queen; "at least suspend thy labours for such brief period as may enable us to observe their progress."

Inez, unconscious that she had been for some time closely observed by her royal mistress, now arose, and presented the unfinished volume for inspection.

"The illuminations are exquisite," observed Donna Beatrice, as she deliberately turned over the gorgeous pages, "and the character so clear and distinct, that even these fading eyes can easily decipher it. If faith, Inez, we shall be jealous of Ferdinand; for if the book be completed in the style in which thou hast com-

“I expected it, ’twill surpass the beautiful altar
missal of which thou hast rendered us so proud.
Ah! how many years must pass away ere the
boy can appreciate the splendid gift!”

“It rejoices me exceedingly to find that the
queen thinks it not unworthy the hand of a
prince,” replied Inez.

“But,” exclaimed the queen, with marked
emphasis, “what strange fancies sometimes arise
from the fond partiality of a parent! Wouldst
thou believe it, Donna Inez, in almost every
group,—the brilliant tints and exquisite finish
of which we can never weary of admiring,—the
features of the Infant seem constantly to oc-
cur! What a strange phantasy!”

The queen raised not her eyes to scan the
countenance of the maiden, whilst uttering her
shrewd remark, but she heard the rapid beat-
ings of her conscious heart. “We must en-
deavour,” continued the queen, “to conquer an
infatuation which almost obscures our reason;
attachments so inordinate are replete with

danger!" The last words were added in a lower tone, and with something of displeasure. They were followed by a painful pause, and the queen having scanned the remainder of the work without remark, returned it to Inez.

Ere the lady had resumed her occupation, a visitor was announced, who, to the surprise of all, and the great joy of Donna Beatrice, was the venerable Abbade de san José. A heartfelt welcome did the good man receive,—for he had been some months absent from Lisbon; and a seat was placed for him near the chair of the queen.

"We had no notice of thy departure, good father; and we are yet ignorant of the direction of thy journey," said Donna Beatrice, when the first greetings were over.

"It was not undertaken, gracious lady, with a view to make its destination or motive known; and, therefore, I was not at liberty to bid adieu to my friends."

"And does the same obligation for secrecy exist now?"

“ ‘It does, indeed!’ ”

“ ‘I much regret it, for the narratives of travellers are a delightful source of amusement and instruction;—but suppose Alphonso wish thee to reveal the purpose of thy journey?’ ”

“ ‘Tis not in the power of kings to rule the consciences of men,” replied the abbade, mildly; “ ‘but it is scarcely probable that my sovereign hath condescended to mark my absence.’ ”

The queen now presented Inez to her spiritual father; who secretly rejoicing that she was no longer deprived of one of her truest and wisest friends, sunk on her knees, and asked his long withheld blessing. The good man's lips trembled as he pronounced the loving words of solemn benediction, and the grave glance with which he regarded the Castilian was full of meaning. But she remarked it not, and when shortly afterwards the queen dismissed all her maidens except four, who remained in waiting at the extremity of the room, Inez was thankful of the permission it gave her to withdraw to her own apartment.

When there, she retired to her small oratory and kneeling, buried her face in her hands. No sound, no faint whisper of murmured prayer escaped her lips, but now and then a heavy drawn sigh burst from her heart. Soon she raised her head, and her sad, tearful gaze fell on the symbol of sufferings, far surpassing all mortal agony, which stood before her. As its expressive look of uncomplaining anguish smote the young mourner, with a reproachful brooding over selfish sorrows, the healthy vigour of her mind became somewhat restored, her knees sought the ground, and her lips moved imploring heavenly aid. And when, she afterwards, she was informed by Sanchiza Don Henriquez de la Zibrieria, with his modesty solicited the honour of an interview ; all traces of the anguish which for a moment crushed the young spirit, had disappeared.

Inez hastened to receive her valued friend and with pleasure observed that the countenance of Donna Maria was beaming with joy, w

Over the pale face of the alchymist flitted an unwonted cheerfulness. In his hand the latter held a bouquet of orange-flowers, and presenting them to Inez, he observed: "They are become strong trees now, señora, and I have gathered every blossom to present to our benefactress."

"Alas! Don Henriquez, why apply to me an epithet to which I have not the slightest claim?"

"Ah! señora, replied Donna Maria, "to offer our thanks for the appointment of Henriquez are we not come?"

"I cannot regret the mistake which has procured me the pleasure of seeing my friends, but it hath so greatly deceived you, that I have yet to learn to what appointment you allude."

"That is strange," replied Donna Maria; "but as, saving thee, we possess no friend at court, we must ascribe this good fortune to thy good offices, although as yet unacquainted with

their success. But, not to inflict suspense unnecessarily on our kind friend, I must at once inform Donna Inez of Henriquez having received official intimation that rooms are ready for him at the Royal College of Arts, attached to the University of Coimbra; where he is to spend a year of close study, preparatory to attending the lectures. Moreover, an annual stipend is, at the same time, and by the same unknown hand, secured to him; which, with thy munificent requital of his poor services, leave to us nothing of this world's goods to desire."

Inez expressed the joy she sincerely felt on hearing such welcome news, and the good matron continued: "I have been advising Henriquez to relinquish those useless studies to which he has hitherto devoted so much time unprofitably. If he would do so, he has now every prospect of obtaining the degree of Bacharel Formado, and I may yet live to see him Disembarragador of the city, or perhaps one of the Juizes de Fora."

“Rather than draw me from my precious studies,” said Henriquez, with animation, “thou shouldst, dearest mother, encourage my devoted perseverance in the cultivation of the sublime science to which I have hitherto chained my best energies. How often have I told thee, that the ‘great secret’ of which I am in search, is capable of extracting from the earth’s baser productions, those which are most precious,—and the wondrous medicine of universal efficacy which I hope to discover, will banish disease and death from the earth, by subjecting every species of suffering to the will of the sage! Yes, however wondrous it may sound, believe me, my words are true, señora; nor is it less so, that I already possess an approximation to the great arcanum, already have approached nearly to projection! Shall I, then, cease my endeavours, now that the prize is just within my grasp? Shall I suffer the mighty power (now so nearly won), that will render him who attains it more powerful than all the monarchs of the earth, and the

benefactor of the whole human race, to be lost, perhaps for ever! As yet, indeed, I darkly labour,—patient of unlooked-for difficulties, and undiscouraged by frequent disappointments;—but soon,—yes, I doubt not, very soon!—I shall reach nature's store-house, and thence acquire knowledge that shall surpass all the wisdom of the philosophers!”

As Henriquez, hurried away by zeal for his favourite science, indulged in an energetic eloquence foreign to his usually reserved and quiet manners; the fire of enthusiasm lit up his dark eyes, and a hectic glow flushed his sunken cheeks. His faith in that wonderful delusion, which in the age in which he lived, and for many succeeding ones, led astray such numbers of acute and powerful minds, was evidently unbounded; it had robbed him of his youth, and was too surely stealing from him his very existence.

Inez beheld him with surprise, and his mother regarded his emotion with mingled pain and

pride ;—but the former, unable to decide whether his dreams were based in reality, or mere illusions, gave another direction to the conversation, by asking Donna Maria if she should not greatly miss the society of her only child.”

“ Ah ! señora, severe is the trial, but I have decided that it is inevitable. So, strangers will occupy the dwelling of my late husband,—and for the sake of his living image, I am content to end my days in a new and strange home ! I go with Henriquez to Coimbra.”

“ ’Tis well,—but my regret at losing my friends must not make me forget to congratulate them on their improved prospects.. May you receive from the change all the benefit you anticipate !”

Donna Maria arose to depart, and Henriquez, timidly approaching Donna Inez, said in a low, earnest tone : “ If my poor prayer may avail with heaven, the future lot of Donna Inez shall be unchequered by cloud or storm !”

“ Ah ! my friend,” replied Inez, with a mourn-

ful smile, "it will then form a marked contrast to my past life."

"Fairest lady," continued Henriquez, his voice faltering as he spoke, "it may be long ere we meet again."

"Then let me not omit this opportunity of repeating once more my acknowledgments of the generous services rendered by thee in the Serra d'Estrella," replied Inez, hastily; and as if anxious to terminate the interview, she embraced the kind matron, and exchanged with her an affectionate farewell. The gentle Henriquez sighed deeply, but presumed not again to address her,—and in a few moments Inez beheld her humble but sincere friends depart.

This visit lightened not the heart of the fair Castilian,—the devoted but hopeless passion of Henriquez (which had she not observed she had possessed no woman's heart) gave her exquisite pain; and forbad her to display all the esteem and gratitude so fully earned by the generous youth. And it was no little grief to her to be-

hold her small circle of friends narrowed by the departure to a distant city, of these, the first she had found in her adopted land.

She was yet drooping, depressed, and melancholy, when Donna Isabel de Sourinha, with hasty step, entered the apartment, and flying to its fair occupant, folded her fondly to her bosom. Inez regarded her friend with some surprise, for such emotion was unwonted in the gentle and pensive Isabel. With increased wonder did she scan her expressive countenance, and beheld joy dancing in her eyes! whilst an effort to assume outward calm, struggled with the rapture that would not be concealed, and caused gravity and smiles to share between them her fair face, even as clouds and sunshine do the heaven of spring.

“Speak, Isabel,—some good fortune hath chanced to thee,—oh, delay not to share it with thy friend!”

“Thou art a shrewd guesser, my sweet Inez!—but how couldst thou so rapidly decide that the joy is mine own?—am I incapable of

being made blest by the happiness of another?—why may not I be the bearer of glad tidings to thee?"

"O, forbear to sport with my feelings! Alas! too well thou knowest, that though resigned,—I trust content,—if happiness be (as I humbly hope) in store for me,—it cannot spring from earthly joy."

"Thou art ever right, my friend,—since all happiness is from Heaven!—but I may hope that the blest news which gives me such exquisite joy, may *somewhat* pleasure thee;—come therefore with me into the plaisance,—this sweet hour should not be wasted here, and we may find some shaded bower, wherein I may share with my chosen friend, the joy that is far too great to be confined to mine own bosom!"

Inez obeyed, and as the ladies strolled through the wide, formal walks, they might have been supposed to have changed natures, for whilst Inez wore the look of pensive thoughtfulness which usually characterized the widowed Isabel,

the latter displayed the sprightly vivacity that sat so gracefully on the brilliant loveliness of her more youthful friend, ere sorrow laid too heavy a hand on her young heart.

In a shaded nook, formed by the angles of diverging walks, stood the simple apparatus,—even then of great antiquity,—that, in spots where no sunbeam ever strayed, was a favourite means of noting the passing hours ;—the costly and ponderous machines, since so simplified, and accessible to the humblest ranks, being then of recent invention, and extremely rare.—It was called a clepsydra, or water-clock, and Inez pausing as she beheld it, with a sigh, observed : “Rememberest thou, my Isabel, that on the fearful eve which was followed by that horrible night I spent in the serra, we passed this way, and noting the hour, appointed the time of my return ?”

“Ah yes, I mind me well,” replied Isabel, without slackening her pace,—“but we will not permit a thought of such miseries to detain us now. Remember, I have a long tale for thee to

hear, ere the sun grow too high to permit our lingering among these bowers. A little further we shall find a seat whereon we can rest whilst thou hearest my story."

Inez permitted herself to be hurried along by her friend, observing: "Let the cause of thy excitement be what it may, my Isabel, I cannot but think thee somewhat fastidious in thy selection of a spot wherein to impart it."

"Consider," replied Isabel with an arch smile, "how annoyed I should feel, if compelled by some intruder to leave thee in suspense at the most interesting portion of my subject; which, if we are not careful to choose a bower little resorted to by the loiterers in the plaisance, might bethe case."

"As thou wilt," replied Inez; "but methinks we have passed many which might have suited well our purpose."

"Not so well as the one we are now approaching; which the labyrinthine walks surround so cunningly, that few would suspect its exist-

ence.—Enter, my friend, for here—and here alone—shalt thou learn that which has filled my heart with joy !”

The ladies turned down a sudden bend of the embowered walk, and found themselves in a small arbour, which, at a few paces distance, was not easily perceived. But what was the surprise—nay, consternation—of Donna Inez, when, seated therein, with a wide parchment in his hand, which he appeared to have been perusing, she beheld Don Pedro. She would have immediately retreated, but the prince had heard their light footsteps, and was in an instant by her side.

“Thou hast earned my boundless gratitude, Donna Isabel,” he joyfully exclaimed,—then lowering his voice to those deep and tender tones whereby it was best recognised by Inez, he continued: “And thou, best and loveliest ! forgive the innocent artifice which has lured thee hither.”

“Alas ! señor,—what means the prince?”

replied Inez, trembling and dismayed ! “ And thou, Isabel, what hast thou done ?”

“ Brought thee to hear the joyous news I promised ; surely thou canst not suppose Isabel would hurry thee into any imprudence ?”

“ What is this but utter madness ?” replied Inez mournfully,—“and if observed, must bring ruin upon us all !”

“ Far different will be thy thoughts when thou hast heard all, my Inez,” murmured Pedro,—“at least, such is my blessed hope !”

“ Isabel !” exclaimed Inez, in a voice of agony, “ why didst thou not spare me this trial !—and I beseech thee, señor, to remember, that such words as these thou canst not utter, nor I listen to, without sin.”

“ Not now, my beloved ! not now ;—such horrible alternative to the misery of daily beholding thee, as Tantalus beholds the sparkling wave, without daring to approach the heaven of thy presence, or listen to the sweet music of thy lips,—exists no more. Behold !”—and he spread

Before her bewildered eyes the parchment he held,—“ behold the treasure which the Abbade De San José hath brought from Rome. It is the papal dispensation of the tie, contracted by the cunning cruelty which made thee sponsor to my son. Read it, my beloved !—behold the ponderous seals, the signature, and doubt no more. My words are truth, sweet Inez, and thou art now my bride! Ah! won with far more difficulties, and a thousand-fold more dear, than was Rachael to the Patriarch, confess that thou art mine!”

The royal youth sunk on his knee and pressed her fair hand to his lips, whilst Inez all trembling, and scarcely comprehending the full meaning of his rapid words, clung to Isabel as if fearful of herself. One glance at the countenance of the prince, revealed to her the triumphant joy, and ineffable tenderness which beamed from his dark, lustrous eyes; and distrusting her too treacherous heart, she dared not look again. On the shoulder of Isabel she veiled her face, and extricating

her hand from the clasp of Pedro, murmured in accents scarcely audible,—“ Isabel, if ever thy poor Inez was dear to thee, support her now ;— if even her own weak heart betray her, yet be thou her safe counsellor,—remembering that thou hast in some sort entangled her in this trial.”

Isabel listened with dismay, but Pedro continued to breathe forth in impassioned tones, his love and hope and joy. He told of his long hopeless passion, when she was in his eyes a vowed and sacred thing ; of the lingering suspense that agitated him, when, divided betwixt hope and fear, he counted over the weary days that elapsed during the absence of the good abbade,—and painted with a lover's fervour, and a poet's skill, the emotions of that moment, when he met the venerable father on his return to Lisbon. At length he paused, but Inez spoke not. “ Hast thou no sweet word, my beloved, wherewith to reward such toils ?” he asked—“ no look of soft approval ? no blessed sign whereby I may know that the joy of my triumph is shared by thee ?”

“ Alas, señor,” murmured Inez, raising her pale face from the bosom of her friend, “ what can I say?—how resolve to damp the joy that overflows thy too sanguine mind? Yet,—aid me, ye blessed spirits, that behold my weakness,—shall I consent to requite with ingratitude my munificent, my royal benefactors? Too well I know that were I to take advantage of the generous partiality of which I am so unworthy, I should invoke on thee, O prince, the direst displeasure of the king, and grieve the heart of my beloved mistress with an extremity of sorrow she hath never known before! Oh, canst thou wish me so basely to repay the truest and noblest friend that ever protected hapless stranger?”

Pedro arose from his kneeling posture, and the light faded from his earnest eyes as Inez proceeded. “ Canst thou, señor, say that thy royal parents would behold with other feelings than these, the union thou art seeking?” Pedro remained silent.—“ Then spare me, too generous prince ! and as thou hast hitherto done, sustain me still in the path of duty.”

“ O Inez ! ”—and the lady’s heart sunk within her, as she remarked that his voice trembled—
“ wert thou less perfect, we were both more blest !—Yet am I not so wrapt in selfishness, as to desire to see thee other than thou art, noblest as well as fairest of women ! Yes, well founded was the apprehension, which, even in the tumult of my joy, whispered that thy truthful and candid nature might refuse my proffered love, unless thou couldst possess it as my recognised princess ;—and alas ! too well I know my father, to promise thee aught at present but a clandestine union. Yet when such cruel thought intruded, vanity was prompt to whisper, (but she loves thee ; and will share thy joy, for to her the hollow pageantry of courts is dull and tasteless, compared with the happiness that will bless your calm retirement.) Yet—ah—Inez ! a cold misgiving now chills my heart, less that which I thought was love,—love, fervent and devoted as that which consumes mine own heart, and capable of any sacrifice that is not sinful,—may be but gratitude ! ”

The veined lids fell heavily on the downcast eyes of Inez, as she replied—"Soon shouldst thou know, O prince, every thought of Inez, were she free to reveal her inmost heart ;—but for the peace of my royal benefactress,—thine own welfare, forbid me to be candid. That my gratitude to thee is unbounded, oh still believe,—but deeper thoughts Inez dares not cherish. Yet excuse me not of pride, señor,—it is not the King and Queen of Portugal, but the parents of Don Pedro, and my own benefactors, whom I will not anger, and will not grieve."

"And is this then the end of all the brilliant hopes that this morning filled my soul with rapture?"

The beseeching and tremulous earnestness of that beloved voice was well-nigh fatal to the assumed calm of Inez,—but making one more effort, she replied: "Suffer me to depart, my lord,—for thine own sake,—for mine,—I entreat, I implore thee!"

"Nay, Inez, if it must be so,—'tis I will go. Thou tremblest, my love, and thy cheek is

pale, suffer me to lead thee to the seat I so lately occupied, when with delightful hopes I expected thee ; now, alas ! they are crushed for a time, though, believe me, not for ever ! Here rest thy tender frame, and recover the effects of a trial which has proved thy mind too powerful for the casket that contains it. Dearest, best, loveliest !—ever wise, ever prudent, ever more regardful of others' weal than thine own ! Pedro even now dares to whisper that he loves thee still,—aye, and not the less, that thy mercy to others is cruelty to him. Adieu !” He carried her hand to his lips,—regarded her with one long impassioned gaze,—and tore himself away.

“ Is he gone ?” murmured Inez ; and sinking into the arms of her friend, she relieved her burthened heart by giving way to a passion of tears.

END OF VOL. III.

THE
QUEEN'S LIEGES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

" I have a tale t' unfold, so full of wonder,
As cannot meet an easy faith ;
But by thy royal injured head, 'tis true !"
King Lear.

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CHAPTER I.

"Oh, heavenly maid ! that art thyself thy dower,
Richer in virtue than the stars in light !"

King Lear.

PAOLO.

"From this hour
O let us part no more ! mine eyes are weary
Of all the cheating phantom shapes of Fame ;!"

LANES.

To see and hear thee, yet love thee not, were past
The power of nature !"

Silvio Pellico.

WHILST the upright mind of Inez achieved the greatest of triumphs,—that of principle over passion,—and overcame in a conflict, which God alone could in its full extent behold ; a conference was held in the king's closet, the issue of which hurried her on a course of action that decided her destiny.

There sat Alphonso—his angry eyes fixed on the specious countenance of Caelho, who stood beside him. The king's lips were compressed, the hand that rested on a small table, on which lay a ponderous mace curiously wrought and inlaid with silver, was firmly clenched, and the embroidered footstool that stood before his chair, was thrust aside, as if by a violent gesture of impatience. The voice of the cunning parasite was even and unbroken, as he said :—"Ah yes, my liege, I am indeed too well assured that my suspicions are well founded,—for scarce an hour since I beheld his highness, the Infant, holding close converse with Donna Isabel de Sourinha, the well-known favourite and confidant of Donna Inez. I watched them to a retired part of the plaisance, where they parted, Don Pedro remaining there, and the lady returning to the palace ; but even as I came hither I beheld Isabel, accompanied by the Castilian, bending their steps towards the same spot. What such secret meetings can betide, it is for my sovereign's penetration to dis-

cover,—sufficient for his servant to relate aught he may behold that threatens the honour of his royal house.”

“Thou hast more to say, count,—I see by thy countenance. Thou knowest it concerns us little, that the Infant indulges a secret amour with this stranger; but thou hast graver fears,—speak then, though they blast me!” The king’s voice trembled, and, as he thus spoke, he struck the table violently with his closed hand.

“Heaven preserve me!” sighed Caelho, with as hypocritical an air as he could assume,—though to do him justice he was not wont to affect devotion,—“from the hateful task of imparting evil tidings to my sovereign! My poor thoughts hath he, indeed, ever commanded, as well as the numerous services more commonly rendered to princes,—and shall do so still. It cannot have escaped the king, that should the power of this fair Castilian over the prince continue, he might, blinded by his infatuation, implore Rome for a dispensation of those ties so adroitly interposed betwixt them.”

“Ha!—but it *had* escaped us!” exclaimed the king. “In fact, either we have been artfully blinded, or there has not been the slightest disposition in either of these young fools to foster their frantic attachment. The utmost our most watchful scrutiny could detect, was a struggle to avoid each other, as if they were striving to conquer a hopeless affection.”

“I fear me, señor, ’twas all assumed, to effect the purpose in which I now perceive they have succeeded so well, that of deceiving others; and there appears, to my poor wisdom, but one means of finally and effectually ridding my sovereign of his troublesome guest.”

“Name it.”

“’Tis even by making her the wife of another! She may, perhaps, be reluctant thus utterly to ruin her presumptuous hopes,—but what right had she ever to indulge them? She may resist the positive command,—but what is a king if he cannot rule the perverse will of a presumptuous girl?”

“And who, thinkest thou, would trust his honour to a woman, whose attachment to the Infant is suspected, if not known, by the whole court?”

“That would I, my liege;—the zeal I have ever felt for the royal house of Braganza,—the love I have so long cherished for the ungrateful Inez,—the friendship I entertained for her gallant sire,—should enable me to endure the frowns with which my affections might be at first requited; while my own vigilance should ensure the fidelity of my reluctant spouse.”

“By the bright hosts of heaven! thy words are welcome as the rains of autumn to the parched fields! Thou wilt accept this maiden for thy wedded wife?”

“I will.”

“She may be thankful that so high a dignity is offered to her acceptance.” Caelho bowed low, and a look of humble gratitude struggled with the malignant joy that lit up his marked features. “Go, d’Ercilia,” said the king, after a pause,

“ send a page to search for this ambitious fair,
and let him bid her instantly to our presence.”

Caelho withdrew, but he had not long departed when the page in waiting requested an interview in the name of the Infant. “ Ha !” exclaimed Alphonso, “ he is right welcome !—bid him enter. ’Tis well,” he continued in muttered accents, “ he hath come in good time,—now will we be satisfied, and not only as a king, but also as a father, be obeyed.”

The gallant prince entered the royal presence, and sinking on one knee, reverently pressed his father’s hand to his lips ; then rising, stood beside him, as perfect a contrast, in form as well as mind, to the designing villain who had occupied the same spot a few moments before, as imagination could devise. Some such thought struck Alphonso, for as he silently contemplated the noble countenance of his princely son, his features became less agitated, and the fire in his restless eye was somewhat subdued.

“ We rejoice to receive our well-beloved son,”

he said, "for we were just wishing to impart to him a decision to which, after mature deliberation, we have this day arrived. It concerns our consort's bower-maiden, the fair Donna Inez." An involuntary shudder passed over the frame of the prince, and the plume of white feathers which hung from the jewelled cap he held, quivered as though a breeze had passed over them. Alphonso, pausing not to remark the effect of his words, continued: "Yes, we have decided that the best and safest state for one so fair, is that of matrimony, and have just promised her (as a reward well earned by his long-tried zeal and fidelity) to our trusty councillor, the noble Count d'Ercilia." If Alphonso expected a burst of surprise and indignation from his son, he was totally disappointed. A death-like pallor alone betrayed the feelings with which Don Pedro heard this announcement, and ere the sentence was concluded it had given place to a deep flush, that left when it passed away, a hectic spot upon his cheek, which increased the brilliancy of

his flashing eyes. "What says the Infant to our determination?" asked Alphonso, surprised that the prince took no advantage of the pause he made, to expostulate or implore."

"'Twould be useless for me," replied Don Pedro,—and his voice usually so clear, was husky and broken,—“to pretend to conceal from the king, that I have long loved, with most devoted fervour, this beauteous and noble lady.”

"Utter not such folly!" replied Alphonso, sternly,—“but say, hast thou aught to remark respecting my decision, which—as thou mayest probably suppose—is irrevocable?”

"If she were not barred to my thoughts, I might, perhaps—"

"But such *is* the case," interrupted the king, "as thou well knowest,—by the ties contracted at the baptism of Ferdinand. And if it were *not* so, know, headstrong youth, that no consideration on earth could prevail on us to consent to thy union with this obscure exile!"

"She is of the noblest rank in Spain, next to royalty," urged Pedro.

“The race of Braganza shall mate with none whose veins lack royal blood !” replied Alphonso, his rising choler betokened by the glow of his fiery eyes.

“Our ancestor,” persevered the prince, “Count Henry, the glorious founder of our house and empire, was little better than a soldier of fortune, and scarcely more noble by birth than the father of Donna Inez.”

“By the soul of that ancestor ! I swear,”—replied Alphonso, springing from his seat,—“an’ thou urge this matter another moment, thou shalt bite the ground whereon thou standest.” As he spoke, half beside himself with rage, at what he conceived the audacity of the prince, he seized the mace which lay on the table beside him. A moment’s pause succeeded, during which Don Pedro stood unflinching and calm, not a quiver of the fringed eyelid denoting a fear of his father’s savage threat. With a less violent tone the king resumed the conversation as he sunk into his chair.—“Besides,—

what boots it for thee to enrage me by pressing the odious subject, since the commands of the church save thee from all danger of committing a folly, which thou art evidently but too willing to perpetrate."

"I perceive," replied Pedro, "it is indeed useless for me to urge the king further; and therefore nought remains for me but to recommend him to press these projected nuptials."

"'Tis well," said Alphonso, complacently; "now thou speakest duteously; and though our royal will was not to be gainsayed, yet shall we more rejoice in this marriage, if it receive thy sanction. Nor would we have thee fail to remember, that many a king would have long ago compelled one who dared aspire to alliance with his blood, to mate with such as he should choose, however lowly; and Donna Inez may be thankful that pity for her orphan state, and consideration of her noble lineage, render us willing to forget her vanity and presumption, and to bestow her on one of the highest nobles of our realm,—one,

too, who is honoured with our personal regard and confidence."

Whilst these words fell on his ear, the pallid hue returned to the face of Don Pedro, and his lips were compressed together with a force that left them bloodless. And thus he stood, when Inez, alone and unattended, was ushered by the king's page into the royal presence.

She started on beholding there her princely lover, and a dimness for a moment obscured her sight;—but with a firm step she approached the king's chair, and sunk on one knee; then arose erect and calm, and of mien scarcely less majestic than the monarch before whom she stood, conscious innocence and rectitude of purpose sustaining her in that august presence.

Alphonso gazed on her for a moment, as if spell-bound; his heart, though rendered callous by the habitual indulgence of self-will, was touched by the resigned sweetness which tempered the unfearing dignity of the maiden's slight and youthful form. Not once, however, did Pedro turn

his eyes upon her, but, folding his arms, fixed his rigid glance,—as if his resolve were taken, and his course appointed, from which he might not swerve.

“ Donna Inez,” commenced Alphonso, “ we have summoned thee to our presence, in order to impart our wishes ; with which, thy loyalty and obedience will, we doubt not, render it easy for thee to conform. Nor have we been unmindful of thy worth, or the consideration due to thy exalted rank ; but believing the time arrived when it is for thy honour and advantage to seek an alliance by marriage, have this day bestowed thy hand on a noble, who, by his gallant deeds and faithful services, hath well deserved to receive some priceless treasure at our hands. We command thee, therefore, to appoint an early day for the ceremony, which shall be performed with state befitting thy birth and that of the illustrious bridegroom. Ourself and our royal consort will grace thy nuptials with our presence ; for the noble on whom thou art bestowed,

stands high in our favour, shares our closest confidence, and occupies a position near our person."

The king paused,—and Inez, whose face grew more pale with every word she heard,—though the spirit of her haughty race stirred within her bosom,—drew up her form to its stateliest height, and fixing her clear and earnest eyes on the monarch's face, replied, with a voice whose silver tones were sweet as the music of the spheres: "I ask not, sire, the name of the noble on whom I am destined to bestow my hand, since I perceive that I am expected to approve him, whoever he may be. But I own I marvel that the royal Alphonso,—the powerful sovereign of this realm,—is so poor in means of requiting his servants, that he must e'en take from an orphan girl her little all, in order to express his gratitude."

"What meanest thou, maiden?—of what does Alphonso purpose to deprive thee?" said the king,—the dark cloud quickly gathering on his brow.

"Even of all that I possess,—the disposal of my hand and plighted troth!"

"But thou knowest not the honour for which we intend thee. We give thee a noble and wealthy spouse,—even our own especial friend, the Count d'Ercilia."

Inez started, and indignation mastering her awe of Alphonso, she cried, while the eloquent blood suffused her queenly brow: "I reject that false and recreant knight,—and would prefer to perish houseless and homeless, to breaking the same bread with him! I refuse, O king! to wed with that dishonoured noble! I will none of his hateful vows!"

"Tell me not, presumptuous maiden, of *thy* weak resolves!—Are we not lord of this realm?—and who art thou, that wouldst dare to contradict our sovereign will?"

The loud tones of the monarch's voice, and the glance that shot from beneath his bent brows, recalled Inez to a sense of her helplessness. She threw herself on her knees, and tremulously

murmured : " I pray thee, O my liege, recall thy promise ;—if it angers thee to behold me at thy court, I will withdraw to some other land,—or if it may more nearly meet thy wishes, cheerfully take the veil. But, oh ! ask me not to wed this man, who hath long been my most cruel enemy !—ask it not, O king ! for I can rather die than obey thee !"

Whilst she thus, with hands clasped and beseeching eyes, breathed her prayer at the king's footstool, Don Pedro suddenly darted from the room.

Bending his bushy brows till they formed but one line above his piercing eyes, the monarch replied, in a low, harsh tone : " We can grant thee but one concession, señora ;—make swift inquiry throughout these broad realms,—and if thou canst find *one* who hath successfully resisted the will of Alphonso, *thou*, too, mayest hope to brave it. But if not, take warning, and succumb in time—for, by the Lord of Life, I swear thou shalt find thy will no match for mine ! Retire,

fair dame, and take better counsel than thine own wilfulness will give thee. Be prepared to-morrow to name with an acquiescent spirit, (far more befitting a noble damsel than the bold petulance but now displayed,) the day when my faithful servant may expect his bride !”

Inez perceived that to beseech or expostulate were alike in vain,—and replying by a mute reverence to the command of the self-willed monarch, she, with a sinking heart, withdrew.

And as she hurried, with rapid and tottering steps, through the winding passages and numerous corridors of the Gothic palace, the lady was unconscious of the greetings of those she met ; she heard no voice, no sound, save the beating of her own heart. On reaching her apartment, she passed Sanchiza, heedless of the anxious inquiries of her faithful attendant, nor paused till she reached her oratory ; where, flinging herself on the ground, she remained prostrate and silent,—regardless of all the affectionate

solicitude of the terrified maid. In vain did Sanchiza implore with tears a word or sign from the wretched Inez,—gasping sobs that convulsed her frame, and seemed to threaten its dissolution, were the only signs by which she could guess even that her mistress lived. The noontide hour of rest was spent by the weeping attendant in fruitless efforts to console or arouse her,—and in vain endeavours to obtain some clue to the cause of her excessive anguish.

And thus Isabel found them, when, (to the exceeding relief of Sanchiza,) as evening approached, she paid a visit to her friend. It was some time, however, ere even the sound of her loved voice, or the soothing influence of her gentle caresses, were recognised by the sufferer ; and when at length they raised her prostrate form, and beheld her agonised countenance, the lady dared not ask the cause of a grief too intense to obtain the relief of tears. She strove rather to minister to her physical aid ; bathing her throbbing temples with cooling balm, and

compelling her to swallow such simple restoratives as were at hand. When her kind offices had somewhat succeeded, and a pressure of the hand, a mournful gaze of recognition denoted returning consciousness, she forbore inquiries, but softly whispered,—“ We will fly to the queen as soon as thou art able,—fear not but she will continue, as hitherto, to protect thee !”

“ Ah no !” murmured, Inez, “ even her kindness can avail me nothing now !”

A cold shudder crept to the heart of Isabel, —but again whispering words of comfort, she folded the despairing girl to her bosom ; and still ventured to hope that as she gradually recovered from the shock, which had evidently been so sudden and severe as to reduce both mind and body to a state of pitiable weakness, she would view her position, however dangerous, with a more hopeful heart.

Whilst engaged in her offices of charity, Sanchiza, who had been summoned from the

room, re-entered, saying: "The Abbade de San José requests to see Donna Inez."

"O, blessed chance! whatever it be, that hath sent the father hither! Now, my Inez, comfort is sent thee, and a wiser friend than thy poor Isabel!"

At the mention of his name, Inez had arisen, and heedless of the concluding words of Sanchez, that he was accompanied by one of the brethren, she rushed into the antechamber, and sinking on her knees before the venerable abbade, exclaimed: "Alas, father! I am lost,—heart-broken."

"I know all, my child,—but be comforted; to despair (however severe our trial) is to insult Heaven." And the good father raised the unhappy lady and led her to a seat.

"Thou knowest all?—then I need not tell thee how I have angered, beyond repair, my best and truest friend! Yes, he abandons me to my fate! Ah, couldst thou have beheld his pallid countenance, and know the while that 'tis I who

have so changed it from the sunny happiness with which he sought me this very morn;—couldst thou have seen his hueless lips, and fixed, lustreless eyes,—thou wouldst reproach me for having caused such anguish to the truest knight that ever loved hapless maiden. Oh! say thou wilt undeceive him, one day,—when the wretched Inez hath passed away, and such knowledge can not endanger his peace;—I beseech ye, *then* do me justice. Tell him 'twas *not* because unable to share his state and dignity, that I refused to requite his devoted affection! Ah, wretched state, and pomp, and power,—but for these empty baubles I were still blest with Pedro's love! But now he hath cast it from him,—I know he hath! else why that glance of stone—why else did he fly when I prayed for mercy? Oh! 'tis too true, he deems me selfish and ungrateful. Promise me, father,—promise me thou wilt one day undeceive him!”

“But what has this to do with the answer thou must give the king to-morrow? Art thou

resigned, my child, to the marriage which he appoints so peremptorily ?”

“ Little thought requires that hateful subject, father ; a calm and fixed resolve is the only feeling it awakens within me. Aye, hear me—once for all—declare, that not even Alphonso’s power shall extort, what fear—and despair—and all the boundless love I felt for my buried sire,—could never win from me ;—a perjured vow ! Let the king imprison me, slay me if he will ;—he shall find that a Castilian girl will rather choose to die, than submit to the cruelest of all tyranny. But let that pass,—’tis nothing. Ah, (if thou canst,) assure me I did not wrong the too generous Pedro, in preferring my duty to the queen, to my obligations to him.”

“ ’Twas almost more than human, my dear child, to entertain such generous thoughts at such a moment ; but not more than I expected from thee. Thou didst indeed do well, aye, nobly, in withstanding the entreaties of the prince.”

“And yet from that scrupulous honour springs a woe, compared to which the threats of the king are but as the idle vapourings of imbecility!” said Inez, in the accents of despair.

“How so!” exclaimed the abbade, with a look of extreme surprise,—and the monk who accompanied him,—whom Inez either did not observe, or heeded not, though evidently listening to the conversation,—moved uneasily in his chair.

“Because I fear he believes me incapable of making one generous sacrifice for *his* sake, who hath risked all for me! Ah, yes, father! I have seen him since, and read it all in his averted countenance,—too surely he believes me worthless, and abandons me to my fate! Well, be it so,—since it restore him to his freedom, though at a cost so dear, if I rightly read his pallid countenance.—Ah, be it so!—Only let me carry with me to my grave, the hope that thou wilt one day undeceive him,—and I submit to be for awhile despised. Alas! the blessed spirits who beheld the struggle between my love for him and

my strict sense of duty, know how dearly won is my victory! But give me thy promise, father,—and one day witness for me, how utterly I abhor those splendid miseries which forbid me to be blest.”

“Thou regrettest the cold denial!—Recall it now!” exclaimed a voice, which made the heart of Inez leap within her bosom! The cowl, the wide capote, fell from the shoulders of the monk, and Pedro was at the feet of his beloved! “I am come, dearest, to requite myself and thee for the dreadful struggle of this fateful morn;—to explain to thee the cause of that assumed apathy, which well-nigh tortured me to madness, and wrung thy gentle bosom with distrustful surmises.”

Surprise and joy well-nigh bewildered the astonished lady, who so suddenly beheld hope springing from the very depths of despair. Her timid eyes, convinced that it was indeed he, sought the countenance of the good abbade,

whose gentle smile, and look of calm approval, re-assured her ; and she listened to the words which the beloved voice breathed in low murmurs beside her. “I sought the king, my Inez, in the faint hope that I might be able to procure from him an approval of my love for thee, not doubting that of the queen would be readily obtained ; for believe me, I knew thee justified in requiring to be espoused with all honour, and fully worthy of the station which I would fain see thee grace. But ere I could unfold my mission, the king imparted to me his views in thy regard ; and though his words filled me with despair, I yet ventured to express my wishes, and urge almost beyond the bounds of his patience thy worthiness to be received as my bride.

But when I found my happiness regarded with indifference, I confess to thee that this cruel project of compelling thee to wed thy bitter foe, gave me hope ; for I saw there was but one means left to save thee from the too successful arts of the

Vile Caelho. Come, then, to the only harbour ~~that~~ can now shelter thee ! Thou hast been as ~~a~~ hunted deer,—and they believe thee now at ~~bay~~, and all but captured ; but here in my arms, ~~thou~~ shalt be safe from all their wiles and power. **Behold** the abbade is here to aid my suit—**Donna Isabel**, too, will tell thee not to fear. Yet by the decision of thine own heart be my doom decided, for if *it* plead not for me, valueless would be the assent granted to the persuasion of others.”

“ What can I say ? ” murmured Inez, the blush of joy once more returning to her pallid cheeks, —“ to deny what thou hast heard were impossible,—to confirm the words I uttered in my wild despair, and unconscious that thou wert nigh, is surely useless ! ”

“ Blest words ! happy disguise ! which displayed to me the heart of my beloved, unshaded by a single reserve ! And now, my sweet bride !—and that such thou art, we may thank those who would have parted us for ever,—let us calmly view the toils they are weaving around thee, and

the venerable father and Donna Isabel shall assist us with their counsel. To-morrow Alphonso demands of thee an appointed day for thy enforced marriage; think not to elude or resist his will,—an attempt to evade it would but condemn thee to waste thy youth in durance, from which, though my heart should break 'neath the walls of thy prison, I should be powerless to rescue thee. Hear me then without displeasure; ere to-morrow thou must be far from hence. Ah! why start, why tremble?—surely thou canst have no fear where all thy love is given!—Behold, the abbade is prepared to receive our vows,—Donna Isabel will not refuse to witness them,—thy escape from the palace is planned, and the abbey church is ready for our secret espousals.”

Inez listened with trembling astonishment, and raised her timid eyes to the abbade, as if imploring his advice. He answered her appeal:—“ I regret, my child, that a clandestine marriage should be needful, but let the scandal of

such a step fall on those who have left thee no other escape from a life of wretchedness. Believe me, Donna Inez, my only reason for consenting to procure the dispensation, was that I feared a time like this,—and I felt confident that thy principle and prudence would prevent all danger of a secret marriage until it became the only means left for thy preservation. Such is now the case, and thou art thereby justified in taking a step, otherwise inexcusable. Thank the heavenly Father that he hath in all thy dangers ever provided thee with the means of escaping them.”

“ But,” replied Inez, “ will not the world believe that I have dishonoured my father’s spotless name ?”

“ And shall a falsehood trouble thy peace, my love ?” said the prince, with eagerness ; “ if the vulgar voice blame thee, it can be but for a time, and what will it say when thou sittest enthroned beside me, thy fair brows encircled by

the jewelled diadem of Portugal ! will it then be said, that thou hast disgraced thy noble ancestry ?”

“ Am I justified in giving scandal, father, by an act which must appear equivocal ?”

“ If evil example be occasioned thereby, answered the abbade, “ the crime will not be thine ; let the consequence rest with those who have driven thee to this step, and be the punishment of the pride that alone prevents thy rights to be known.”

Inez turned to the prince, and with a graceful bashfulness that did not conceal her confiding affection, placed her fair hand in his, saying—
“ My doubts are satisfied,—the lowly gift is thine ! Oh that it were worthier of thy exalted virtue, and nobility of soul !”

It is needless to say that Pedro accepted the coveted boon with rapture. The preparations for their flight were hastily made,—by the same small and concealed postern through which Caelho

d left the palace to join his captive, the
ers fled !—the abbey church of San José wit-
ssed a ceremony unusual within its venerable
lls,—and Donna Isabel returned unnoted to
palace.

CHAPTER. II.

"The revolution and the worth of Time,
Rolling his years with an avenging flow
Alike o'er all, hath been a thread-worn theme
To tune the sentiment of many an age."

Montgomery.

HAPPY are those times in which the annalist finds nothing to record !—for it is to the sufferings, the calamities, the crimes of humanity, that the historian owes his scenes of most engrossing interest. In the calm, even flow of the days of peace and happiness, little is found to excite the sympathies of a spectator ; and in fact, during those blest periods which occur occasionally as resting-places in every life, when content and happy we take breath for awhile ere the rushing tide of events bring new cares in their train,—the world usually takes little interest in

Our concerns, and averts its cold, prying eyes
from scenes wherein it finds nought but peace !

Even so will we pass by the few following
years that rolled swiftly by Don Pedro and his
illustrious consort,—nor for a brief time arouse
from the obscurity in which they have reposed
for so many ages the characters which have
spoken and acted in the preceding pages.

Remembering, therefore, the lapse of time,—
without pausing to detail the incidents that
marked its flight,—we select a mild evening late
in the spring, and approach that fair valley
through which flows the changeful waves of the
bright Mondego. On the northern bank of the
river, seated on the breast of an eminence, and
surrounded by hills luxuriantly clothed with
pine-trees and oaks, cypresses and olive groves,
appeared the stately city of Coimbra,—which
was just beginning to extend towards that east-
ern plain now covered with her more modern
buildings. Near the city, and finely contrast-
ing with the cultivated summits of the less

towering hills, the lofty and steep Busaco reared its stern and rugged brow, terminating almost perpendicularly on the margin of the Mondego, that vast chain of mountains called the Serra de Caramella. .

On the southern bank of the river that bold headland was opposed by the Serra de Murcella ; and the bed of the Mondego, being narrowed by those stubborn boundaries, rushed between them with a violence that (when swollen by its tributaries) rendered its navigation extremely perilous. Such was the case on the evening on which we resume our story,—for, although past the time when the waters usually subsided, and the bright-hued leaves of the luxuriant gourds had commenced their rapid vegetation on some portions of the Campo de Mondego, yet were the waves still so high as to completely conceal the bridge that connected Coimbra with the fine country to the south of the river,—its peculiar construction enabling it to resist those annual floods.

On a rugged road, leading from the north towards the city of the university, betwixt fragrant hedges of wild rosemary and myrtle, which he beheld with the curious glance of one unaccustomed to such scenes, rode a stalwart knight, fully armed,—save that the place of his ponderous helm, which was borne by his squire, was supplied by an amuce of green velvet, lined and trimmed with miniver. His spear, too, and emblazoned shield, were borne by his followers, of whom twelve, beside his page and squire, attended him ;—but a two-handled sword, reaching nearly from his shoulder to his heel, and a ponderous mace slung at his saddle-bow, betokened him well prepared against surprise. Over his handsome face a shade of thought hath passed since we beheld it last, but without having so robbed his blue eyes of their joyous glance as to render it difficult to distinguish the gallant De Lacy.

As he rides through scenes somewhat similar to those with which five years ago he was so

familiar,—remembrances, regrets, anticipations, thronged upon his mind ;—and finding his cheerful spirit beginning to succumb beneath their influence, he strove to divert his thoughts by holding occasional converse with his squire. But whatever theme was started, it quickly died away,—and each succeeding pause grew longer, and the effort required to break it greater, when the sweet melody of a choral song saluted the travellers, and shortly afterwards a numerous group of peasants entered from a side branch of the road along which they were journeying. They were clad in festive robes, and crowned with green leaves and flowers. One preceded them, playing on a guitar, and the whole were singing to its accompaniment one of those simple hymns to the Virgin, which sound so sweetly when the united voices of a happy peasantry are heard blending in solemn harmony at the close of day.

And thus the smooth verse, even at this distant age remembered on those changed shores, flowed from reverent lips, in honour of her

Whose protection is ever implored at the dim
evening hour.

“ Para Mai de Deos
E de homens mortais
Nasceis O Maria !
Louvada sejais.”

The troopers drew aside to suffer the procession to pass them unbroken, and joined their deep voices with those of the simple villagers, who as they went on their way continued :—

“ Nasceis como estrelha
E Aurora ! Sois mais ;
Soiz luz, Sol, e Lua ;
Louvada sejais.”

Following the rustic groups, the travellers came to a small village, and found at each entrance thereof arches of light wood-work, covered profusely with foliage and flowers, while before every door the road was strewn with branches of evergreen, rosemary, bay, and myrtle, with here and there a choice spray of the rarer orange or lemon. Listening crowds were attracted by the simple strains of the jewsharp and guitar, the

.

former being no slight addition to the concert ; whilst groups of happy dancers beat time with their glancing feet, on the spacious green in front of the church. The travellers gazed for awhile on the cheerful scene, but as they left the spot, the remark (half indifferent, half regretful) breathed by one of the knight's followers, might furnish a cue to the thoughts of all. " Pooh ! 'tis tame pastime compared to the joyous festivals of merry England." Alas ! and England's peasantry too, had *then* their innocent revels, their numerous festivals!—where are they now ?

The road crossed a slight eminence, and commanded an extensive view of the swollen Mondego.

" How is this, Hubert ?" suddenly exclaimed De Lacy, addressing his squire, (for he whom we erewhile knew as the slim but stout-hearted page, Hubert Eltringham, had now reached man's estate,) " did they not say we should cross the river by a bridge at Coimbra ? Surely no bridge could bestride such waves as these !"

They all gazed from their vantage ground over

the wide-spread river, but with no better success. De Lacy's keen eye, however, detected westward of the city, and nearly before them, a ferry-boat, which appeared surrounded by people, as if put about to leave the shore. He pointed it out to his people.—“Thither will we hasten,” he said,—“I have no concerns in Coimbra; instead, therefore, of continuing onward to the city, we will at once cross at the ferry.” A narrow path, diverging from the road they were pursuing, led downward to the beech, and setting spur to their horses they hastened through its various windings. The sudden descent, however, and high hedge-rows, denied them a glimpse of the river, and the real distance being doubled by the sinuosities of the way, the travellers had the disappointment of finding when they reached the shore, that the boat had already crossed a third part of the swollen stream.

Some peasants, whom they found at the ferry, endeavoured to console them by the assurance that the barge required scarcely half an hour to

cross the river ; but De Lacy, with his native impetuosity, proposed to swim the horses over ; and his followers, not unconscious of the danger, but delighted to brave it, rejoiced to obey the rash command. Without pausing to deliberate, they plunged into the tide, and the wondering rustics gazed after them, astonished at their hardihood. Ere long, however, they regretted their rashness ; for though the first welcome of the cool wave refreshed and invigorated the horses, yet ere they reached the centre of the stream, (owing partly to the rapid current, but far more to their previous exertion during a long day's journey, and the weight of metal each carried,) could scarcely maintain their distended nostrils above the waves. De Lacy perceiving that *thus* to gain the opposite bank would be impossible, commanded his men to quit their horses and trust to their own limbs for safety ; setting at the same time the example, and being repaid by observing his noble barb, on finding himself relieved of his burthen, make

renewed efforts to reach the opposite shore. At this moment the ferry-boat disembarked its passengers, and the rowers perceiving the danger of the steel-clad strangers, hastened to meet them ;—one by one the wearied knight and his companions were soon rescued from their peril.

On the margin of the river they found one individual, who had watched their escape with intense anxiety, and who advanced to receive them as they landed, with congratulations on their safety ; at the same time administering a mild rebuke, and proffering, in the name of his community, such aid as their need required. This ready hospitality was gladly accepted, and his well-meant reproof received with respect ; for he was readily recognised, by his cowl and flowing robes, as a brother of some neighbouring convent. “ ’Twas the weariness of our steeds, father,” replied De Lacy, “ that betrayed us ;—in truth we left Pelhaça at sun-rise, and rested but for a short two hours at Vendas Novas, during the extreme heat of noon. But, vener-

able father, if we did not possess the rash hardihood for which thou blamest us, how many an endangered life would be lost, which is now saved by our daring seamen! Several crews have, within the last few months, been preserved on our island shores, by that very recklessness of danger which thou art now condemning."

"Mistake me not, my son!" answered the monk; "had such a motive actuated you now, I had commended it. Ah, would that men were ever mindful, how every action not in itself sinful, is valuable or worthless by the intention which accompanies it! Hadst thou perished in these waves, thy death had been little better than suicide, whilst to have incurred the same fate in an effort to save a fellow-creature, were to become a martyr of charity!"

Either convinced by the good man's reasoning, or unwilling to contend with weapons which the studious sage can far better wield than belted knight, De Lacy remained silent, and leading his yet panting destrier, (every steed having safely

reached the shore,) he followed the religious up a steep ascent, on the summit of which his convent stood.

Having surmounted the rugged acclivity, De Lacy paused to gaze upon the wide prospect that was spread beneath him, where the rugged magnificence of mountain scenery, and the luxuriant fertility of a highly cultivated region,—city and wilderness,—groves and gardens,—river and forest,—basked in the golden light of the setting sun.

On the opposite shore, he beheld in the far distance the lofty mountains of Lusao, and more nearly the rugged Busaco, between which and the Serra de Murcella, (on the least elevated portion of which he stood,) the pent river rushed with a sullen roar, which was audible to him on his lofty resting-place. Far to the left he traced for miles the Campo de Mondego, that vast plain, which like the valley of the Nile is rendered fertile by the overflowing of its river. The waters were now receding, and De Lacy learned from

his venerable guide, (who pointed out as he gazed, each object worthy of remark,) that the swollen state in which he found the river was seldom prolonged so late in the season, which he attributed to the heavy and long-continued equinoctial gales. Just below them, the white walls of an extensive quinta glittered amidst the dark foliage of its groves, and was surrounded by an almost endless variety of lawns and gardens, which covered with verdure and foliage the whole valley beneath. To this spot, which was sheltered by a gentle hill crowned with the splendid cyresses of Portugal, the eyes of De Lacy again and again returned, but at length yielding to the suggestion of his venerable guide, he followed him to the hospitable house of peace.

Over its portal these words were inscribed :—

“ Quisque domum nostram veniens intrabis amicus,”

“ Ante tuos oculos aspice signa crucis ;”*

and around it were assembling, to receive their

* “ Whoso shall enter here, before thine eyes behold the holy cross.”

evening dole, a crowd of humble pensioners. Several aged monks, too infirm to undertake the more arduous labours of the field, or the delicate achievements of the pen or the bright-hued pencil,—dealt out with sweet words of love and sympathy the plenteous alms. Fine specimens were they of the aged fathers, to whom St. John Ohimachus alludes, when he says,—“ I have seen some monks, worthy of eternal memory, of an angelic aspect, hoary with venerable age, of profound innocence, and full of the simplicity of wisdom ; not insipid or irrational, like the old men of the world,—bland, meek, placid, joyful ; nothing feigned in them, nothing negligent, nothing adulterated in words or deeds.” Theirs were hearts, that as Trimethius says, “ had grown old but corrupted not.”

They gave a courteous greeting to the strangers as they entered, but quitted not their poor ; and the venerable guide led Sir Alfred and his attendants to the guest-hall, where (the care of their horses being spared the weary travellers)

they found prepared for them a welcome meal. Scarcely were they seated however, when, according to the custom of the place, several brothers brought basins and towels, and kneeling with meek humility, bathed the aching feet of their guests ; a refreshment only to be duly appreciated by travellers in a sultry clime ; and scrupulously rendered by those who love to imitate in their lives the actions of their Redeemer.

When De Lacy beheld the religious kneeling at his feet, he said : “ But that I know it is the custom of thine order, venerable father, I should think it far more meet that I, a sinner, should prostrate before thee ! ”

“ Woe is me ! my son,” the brother slowly replied ; “ we are all sinners ! But the duties of charity that come within our reach, are (owing to the situation of our monastery) but few. Our parent house stands in a frequented spot, which is passed by many travellers,—and such numbers claim its hospitality, that did they thus welcome every visitor, they would have nothing

else to do from sun-rise to sun-set. In such a case, however, our rules provide that a certain number shall be thus served every day, and the remainder attend to their own wants ; ample means of supplying them being of course provided."

" Hospitality is not unknown, father, in mine own island," replied DeLacy ; who was as jealous of his country's honour as of his own ; " for who has not heard of the guest-hall within the abbey-garth of Durham ?—the sumptuous hospice that stands between the church and the gates of the abbey of Crowland ?—or the hostel at Glastonbury, called the Abbot's inn, built for the accommodation of those who could not be lodged at the abbey ? And many a noble monastery like that of Reading spends more money annually in hospitably entertaining poor guests, than in supporting the whole community of monks."

" The noble institutions for religion and charity with which England abounds are well known, my son, and are surpassed by those of

no nation in Christendom. But address thyself to thy much-needed repast, sir knight; and in choosing thine hour of rest, be mindful of the wants of thy wearied frame." The good monk retired, and the plenteous viands to which he invited them, quickly disappeared before the zealous attentions of the travellers.

CHAPTER III.

" Horatio, or I do forget myself !
The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever."

Shakspeare.

" And thou,
The star of home, who in thy gentleness
On the harsh nature of usurping man
Benign enchantment beautifully shedd'st,—
Soft as the dew-fall from the brow of eve,
Or veiling moonlight on the tempest thrown."

Montgomery.

ON the bowers of that delightful quinta, the sweet branches of which had wooed the lingering gaze of De Lacy, (as from the cliff above it he regarded the wide-spread landscape,) the lavishing hand of taste had bestowed its utmost care ; and where nature had been most bounteous, refined her graces to the utmost perfection. Those pleached walks, and winding alleys, and bowers

impervious to the heat of noon, invited to contemplation, and proclaimed peace ; whilst breeze-diffusing fountains, and meandering streams, gave a perpetual verdure to the spreading lawns, and prolonged the sweetness of abundant flowers.

At the moment when De Lacy was rescued from the rapid current of the Mondego, two stately forms were gliding beneath those gigantic trees, and through those winding walks ;—and if we may compare that sweet spot to the lost Eden, we may well deem them, with their majestic beauty and looks of tranquil happiness, fittest types that earth hath seen, of the primal pair. All that was once stern in the warrior's noble countenance had as completely vanished as his steel garniture, now dismissed for the easy vesture of home ; and the expression of cheerfulness and peace that lit up his face with smiles actually imparted to it a degree of youthfulness which we missed when we beheld it last. Who would believe, were that royal countenance time's

only chronicle, that some five years have flown since then ? Not so the lady, whose slender proportions, and graceful elasticity of step and bearing, hath been in some degree supplanted by the quiet dignity of more matured beauty ; but still pervades each gesture that indescribable charm, the graceful propriety of look and motion which we know not how to define ;—save that it is found but with exquisite symmetry of form, and a delicate and elevated mind. One small hand clasped to her bosom the folds of the peculiar shaped mantilla, still worn in the district of Coimbra ; it had been thrown loosely around her head and shoulders, but having fallen back, left her fair throat and waving tresses to be saluted by the evening breeze. The braids of her dark silken hair were folded around a brow of intellectual beauty, and her fawn-like eyes, as they rested on her wedded lord, beamed with tenderness and confiding love. If aught were wanting to denote the identity of that gentle wife, the fulness of her lips, and their chaste and gentle smiles, would

leave no doubt of the presence of the noble and happy Inez. Yes, 'twas she, and beside her, her royal husband, bearing about him no indication of the prince or warrior, save the jewels that secured his plume and mantle, and the slender blade depending from a broad baldric which crossed his ample chest. But they are conversing,—let us lend an ear,—'tis Pedro speaks.

“And what motive urged Father Anselm to counsel thee from the performance of thy promise?”

“That I did not learn,—perhaps he fears jealousy may be excited in some rival for the favour, when it is found that a Castilian is preferred to one of thine own people. Unhappy Castile! whose best sons are doomed to seek homes amongst strangers! Can I, my dear lord, obey Father Anselm, and decline all interference on behalf of Don Emanuel Viegra?”

“Certainly not—thy word is already given to aid him.”

“Then do thou refuse the prayer I too rashly made.”

“ Ah, my beloved, thou knowest I can refuse thee nothing !”

“ But the good father’s words were of solemn warning and entreaty, for on learning from me, in reply to his inquiries, that I had in truth been soliciting this vacant post for my unhappy countryman,—he implored me, in words whose agitated and earnest entreaty shook my very soul, never more to attempt influencing thee in behalf of a native of Spain. No wonder that I promised him, for even now some vague but clinging apprehension chills me as I recall his voice and look of warning.”

An involuntary shudder accompanied these words, and Pedro, as he drew his princess closer to his bosom, remarked that her cheek was pallid and her eyelid charged with a rising tear. “ What hast *thou* to fear, my sweet wife?” he softly said; “ if aught cumbers this fair world, sufficiently vile to wish thee harm,—is not my power—my love—?”

“ I will not fear,” interrupted Inez,—“ yes,

'twere unjust to thee to dream of dangers now !—
Could human malice have wrought me evil, I had
long since been crushed to the earth by accumulated miseries ; but now I know I am safe
beyond the reach of human power to work me
wrong, since *thou* art my ever-watchful guardian.
Here then I trust, and will strive to forget the
warning that so fearfully alarmed me. Be *Vivien*
aided, as thou wilt it to be so ; but I pray
Heaven the cruel tyranny that has so long oppressed my country, may cease to afflict her
unhappy children, and never more extort from
me the sympathies so difficult to withhold, though
perhaps scarcely indulged with prudence.” . . .

The path which the royal pair slowly traced,
was now suddenly narrowed by the intrusive
branch of a white rose-tree. It was that Persian
variety that blooms in every season, and was
bending to the earth with the weight of its
dewy blossoms. The prince held back the laden
spray as the lady passed, and ere relinquishing
it, gathered a half-blown flower surrounded by

opening buds, and placing it amidst her luxuriant tresses, said,—“ The glitter of gems amidst thy raven hair may enhance thy beauty, my beloved ! but methinks these snowy blossoms a more fitting adornment of thy pure and intellectual loveliness. They droop, sweet Inez !—oh for the talent of some courteous troubadour to sing the envy of the outrivalled flowers !” The Infanta smiled, and Don Pedro as he more securely fixed the fair flowers on her graceful head, remarked : “ The jewelled diadem of Portugal, my love, when beside me thou art crowned its queen, will less become thee than do these simple blossoms !”

“ Ah !” sighed Inez, “ what can that crown, with all its pomp and strict observance, bring to increase our present happiness ? I only grieve that it alone can dispel the single cloud still brooding over our destinies.”

“ Ah !—I ask thee not the meaning of thy words,—too well I know how galling to the pure of heart it is, to be doubted ! Thou yearnest

that the world should know thee as thou really art,—the wife of Pedro !”

“ And in Heaven’s good time, it will be so,— meantime I am bound to rest content, that angels have registered the holy vow, which an earthly court dare not receive. Meantime the day shall ne’er o’erslip me, unburthened with a prayer for strength from on high to fortify that hapless maid, (should such there be,) who is, or may be tempted to take evil example from my doubtful fame.”

“ But thy meek endurance of this cruel trial shall not suffice,” replied Pedro with vehemence of voice and gesture, “ for I swear to thee, that I will more jealously scrutinize the oaths of allegiance my nobles pay to thee, than those they render at my footstool ; and will more rigidly require that they receive thy children as my heirs, than avow the already amply recognised rights of Ferdinand !”

“ Thou art ever too generous,” replied Inez ;
“ I ask not, wish not,”—a sudden rustling in the

bushes near them interrupted the words of the Infanta, and as the royal pair turned towards the leafy screen, which was however perfectly impervious, a loud shrill eldrich laugh echoed through the valley.—“Ha ! ha ! ha !” rang in their startled ears, and again apparently more distant, “ha ! ha ! ha !” was borne more faintly on the evening air. Don Pedro's blade was instantly sheathless, and he rushed towards a path that at a few paces distant intersected the one in which they had been conversing. On reaching it, he beheld to his surprise, Father Anselm advancing towards him, with hurried step and agitated looks. To the hasty inquiries of the prince, the monk replied, that as he was leisurely approaching the quinta, absorbed in the perusal of his office, a man rushed with such violence against him, as to dash the breviary from his hand.

Such an incident was totally unprecedented in those quiet groves, but they concluded that some half-witted peasant had occasioned the

alarm ; and the attendants, who had at some distance followed the Infant and his consort, having been commanded to have the plaisance strictly searched ere night, Father Anselm accompanied them to the quinta. The careful examination that immediately followed, failed in both its objects : no trace of the intruder was discovered, and the good monk saw his breviary never more.

The following morning found Sir Alfred De Lacy seated with Don Pedro in a spacious hall decorated with sylvan adornments which indicated the favourite sports of the princely owner. The skins of wolves and bears and innumerable deer lined the walls, and were thrown over the simply constructed arches ; and antlers and tusks, and other formidable spoils, were mingled with partizan spears and such defensive armour as was usually worn in the chase. Several splendid Spanish hounds extended their lazy limbs in the sunshine that poured in at the open door ;

and one fine creature rested his powerful jaws on the knee of the prince, whose beautifully formed hand caressed the broad forehead and silken ears of his favourite. Don Pedro was evidently of the number of those who considered the noble art of venerie almost as glorious as that of war.

“ Last evening, didst thou arrive ?—and spent the night at the convent of Benedictines ?—Have we then been found so unmindful of old friends, that thou didst shrink from claiming our hospitality ? ”

“ Mistake me not, señor ; how could I present myself before a royal lady, all weary and travel-soiled ? ”

The countenance of the prince brightened, and he grasped the hand of the Englishman with earnest cordiality, as he replied : “ I thank thee, noble De Lacy ;—oh ! believe me, although to avoid wounding my father’s pride, or exasperating his haughty passions, my marriage with Donna Inez is not openly avowed, yet ’twould

give me exquisite pain to suppose the position of the Infanta doubted by such as thou."

"There is no danger of so grave an error, señor. With such as have been so fortunate as to know Don Pedro, or but behold his beauteous consort, no shade of doubt can linger."

"I believe thee;—oh! surely none could behold my Inez, and be deceived by the obscurity that at present surrounds her fame. But, my friend, I did not think to see thee thus, again,—lonely and a wanderer. Is thy heart so stern that the blue eyes of thy country's beauteous daughters fail to awaken it to love? Ha! a sigh?—now heaven forefend that thou hast fixed thy affections unwisely!"

"That remains to be decided," replied Sir Alfred, gravely; "for know, O Prince! that in this sunny land dwells the mistress of my destiny. Nay,—'twas in her cause thyself erewhile found me doing battle; and didst aid me so opportunely against my too numerous assailants some five years ago."

“Why, surely it was a Moorish damsel who took refuge in that convent!—and now I bethink me I heard of some strange adventures of thine; and also of hospitality extended to thee among these singular people. How often will one word oft bring back the forgotten incidents of years! Well do I remember, that my dread of Caelho's interest at court forced me from that house of refuge almost at the moment that my beloved entered it. Little leisure had I then to waste a thought on the concerns of others, whose own heart was o'erburthened with distracting thoughts! Well, thank Heaven those trials are all past! But thou must enlighten me, De Lacy, respecting thy heart's history—perhaps I may aid somewhat to convert all thy cares, as mine have been, to happiness unspeakable! But we will not now prolong our selfish conference. I yearn to present thee to that beloved being, whose love hath converted the joyless wilderness of my existence into a terrestrial Paradise! Come—the Infanta ex-

pects me in her bower,—how extreme will be her surprise on beholding thee !”

They arose from the couch of furs whereon they had been resting, and the prince led the way through several spacious rooms, adorned and furnished with the utmost magnificence that the age could boast ; until a page waiting at the door of the lady's bower, announced the approach of Don Pedro. The Infanta met him at the threshold.—“ Ah, my love !” she exclaimed,—“ I began to fear——” she paused on beholding him accompanied, for the prince had purposely brought De Lacy unannounced. The knight made his approach with an observance of forms, rather due to the lady's real rank than required by that she assumed ; and Donna Inez having returned his greetings with native dignity and sweetness, addressed her lord :—“ Do I err,” she said, “ in believing I behold the young English knight, De Lacy ?”

“ Thou errest never, my beloved !”

“ 'Tis he !—welcome, gallant and noble warrior ! thrice welcome ! true friend of Pedro !”

De Lacy took the fair hand so gracefully proffered, and carried it to his lips. "I thank thee, O gracious princess," he replied, "for having saluted me by so proud a name. To be the friend of Don Pedro, is indeed an envied privilege."

The attentions of all were now claimed by two smiling urchins of some three and four years old, who heedless of a stranger's presence clung round their father's knees, and implored his blessing. "May Heaven bless ye! my boys," said the prince, embracing the rosy cherubs,—nor, in doing so, overlooked one, who from the arms of the good Sanchiza extended its little hands to share the envied caress; the proud and happy mother looking on the while with delighted eyes. "Behold our children, De Lacy,—our gallant boys,—our fairy girl!" But I will whisper thee a secret—*this* is the mother's favourite!" As he spoke, Pedro presented his little ones to the knight, retaining on his knee the youngest, to whom the latter sentence referred.

"Nay," said the smiling Inez, "thou wilt then still accuse me of a preference for our girl?"

"And shall hear thee plead guilty to the charge, my love," replied the prince, against whose breast the beautiful infant leaned her clustering curls, as she gazed into the face of her sire with such a smile as the angels might have worn who visited her innocent dreams.

"My sweet Beatrice!" murmured Inez, with tones of exquisite tenderness,—“I know not what dwells in my heart for thee! It is not that I less love my boys, but that the affection thou hast awakened is more apprehensively tender, and ever mindful of thy helplessness. I remember mine own early years, and the passionate yearnings I then felt for a mother's love; and thus it is that for thy sake, far more than for these, I dread the summons that must sooner or later render my children motherless.” Bending over her fair child, the princess kissed its sweet and rosy lips. “Take them hence,”

she said to the attendants, "lead them to their sports ere the day grow too warm." The merry troop departed through the wide door, which opened on a terrace, and descending several verdant steps, chased each other over the daisied lawns, and joyously sported among the dark-leaved and thornless myrtles; whilst now and then their shrill and happy laughter reached the ears of their parents, who disdained not to pause occasionally in their converse with De Lacy, to indulge in a smile at the elfin sports of their lovely offspring. Ere long, however, Don Pedro quitted the bower; it might be that a whisper breathed in his ear shortly before by the attendant page, might have caused his absence; but be that as it might, he found in an adjoining room the venerable Abbade de san José. It required but the moment occupied in receiving his blessing, to convince Don Pedro that no pleasing mission had brought thither his venerable friend. "Thou hast something of painful import to communicate; what is it, father?—

assure thyself it can give me no serious uneasiness, whilst it wounds not the ear of Inez."

" 'Tis the old danger, my son!—the king is daily growing more urgent for thee to contract a *second* marriage."

"Ha! am I never to enjoy peace?"

"I yesterday received a summons from the queen, and learned that the king insists on her grace using her utmost influence to induce thee to decide which of those royal ladies whom he hath proposed to thy selection, thou wouldst prefer, as he is fully resolved immediately to set on foot negotiations for the alliance."

"I will to Lisbon instantly, and reiterate my determination never to wed again!" exclaimed Don Pedro, with a darkling brow. "But what says the queen? My royal mother, methinks, must guess the indissoluble nature of my engagement here."

"I believe, in truth, she does; and therefore did she communicate to me the king's commands, that by my means thou mightest be warned.

Alphonso thinks the life of Ferdinand too frail, on which alone to rest the succession to his throne."

"But, blessed be God ! I have other sons, and of fairest promise."

"That the king knows full well, but not their right to reign, failing their elder-born."

"Shall I then at once avow my marriage?"

"I dare not advise it," replied the abbade, after a pause of deep reflection,—“ah, no, thou knowest not even now thy self-willed sire, or thou wouldst not have suggested so desperate a means of terminating these difficulties. I see in truth no safer course before thee than that thou hast hitherto pursued—a firm, but respectful deferring of renewed vows. For this cause came I hither—first that thou be prepared against Alphonso's schemes to win or compel thee to his will ; and secondly, to bear to the queen thy answer to the request which the king transmitted through her."

"I thank thee, father, and will be mindful of

thy warning ; but I beseech thee undertake to arrange the form of my reply, for I am utterly weary of this unceasing interference with my domestic peace. Take, then, my final answer,—no one better knows than thyself that I am as unable as unwilling to entertain the galling proposition. Thou wilt now visit the Infanta ; but be cautious that no word or look reveal to her aught of the king's restless persecution."

" Pardon me, señor, if I deem it more prudent to return at once to Lisbon ; my litiero awaits me, and by using good speed I may reach the convent where I slept last night, ere the mid-day heats. The queen anxiously expects my return, and whilst my countenance betrays, as it did to my prince, the thoughts that most occupy my mind, I had better not enter the presence of the Infanta."

" Thou art a prudent counsellor, father ; long ere this day have we had reason to bless thy zealous affection, and contempt of fatigue in our service. Time thy return as thou seest best."

When Don Pedro returned to the lady's bower, he found De Lacy just proposing to depart,—“Not for the world!” exclaimed the prince; “so desperate a champion cannot be indifferent to the delights of the chase!—Thou must loiter here awhile, and experience with me the joyous excitement of the sylvan war.”

“He has been answering my inquiries respecting his sister,” said Donna Inez,—“thou rememberest the fair Edith, my lord?—she hath but little more than a year been a professed sister in the convent that educated her. I must relate to thee at a fitting opportunity the touching narrative which De Lacy hath just given me, respecting her luckless attachment. Nor hath the quest in which he is now engaged been unrevealed,—yet forgive me, Sir Alfred, if I marvel that thou hast been content for five long years to leave unwooded the lovely girl of whom thou canst speak with so much rapture.”

De Lacy sighed heavily as he replied: “When last I visited this land, myself and Edith were

despoiled orphans ;—only a poor remnant of whose birthright escaped the sacrilegious hands of a rapacious guardian. But few weeks have passed since the spoiler died, and urged by the representations of his confessor, made tardy reparation by bequeathing me the whole of his ill-gotten wealth. “’Twas then, I for the first time ventured to dream of re-visiting Portugal, and endeavouring once more to behold the matchless fair, whose image neither distance nor time had been able to efface from my heart. I obtained an interview with my sister, proposed to her my schemes, and in doing so, unwittingly betrayed the attachment I had long nourished, though never before avowed.


“’Twas then I learned, to my extreme surprise, that Azayda hath long been in heart a Christian! —Oh, had I known this before, not even my poverty should have prevented my extricating her from the dominion of her Moorish kindred! What may ere this have been her fate, I know not, and dare not attempt to conjecture ; but a few days will now decide whether my kinsman’s

restitution was made too late to prevent the wreck of my dearest hopes."

"Such being thy circumstances," replied Don Pedro, "we will not detain thee long. To-morrow morn, myself will accompany thee on thy journey, —we will take the best hunting-ground, and in our route can chase the wild boar or dappled deer; after which, I will leave thee to pursue thy journey at thy best speed."

To refuse the royal invitation was impossible, and Sir Alfred acquiesced with the best grace he could assume, conscious that a few hours' delay after an absence of five years, could not appear important in any eyes but those of a lover; and perceiving that Pedro, forgetful of the tortures of suspense, thought only of the delight he should bestow on his friend by sharing with him his favourite pastime. "Go," said the prince, addressing the page,—“tell Ruyz del Pulgar that by dawn to-morrow, we will make the Serra de Carramella echo to the blasts of our hunting bugle.” And with the joyous eagerness which

distinguishes the lovers of rural sports, Don Pedro constrained his guest, who, but for the anxieties of the moment, had to the full participated in his exhilaration, to inspect his menage, and discuss the merits of his deep-mouthed hounds.



CHAPTER IV.

"Not for love, not for her beauty's light,—

* * * * *

No, not for love, the deepest damned may be
Touched with Heaven's glory, ere such friend as he
Can feel one glimpse of love's divinity !"

Moore.

WHILST Don Pedro, forgetful in the delight of the hour, that his peremptory sire had wishes respecting him which it was as dangerous to thwart as impossible to comply with, spent the happy evening in anticipating the sport of the morrow; two nobles slowly paced beneath the triple row of stately trees which extended for nearly a league beside the golden waves of the broad Tagus. Their plumed caps were drawn over their gloomy brows, and a moody thoughtfulness sat upon the features of each, as with downcast eyes they held murmured converse.

“ I tell thee, Pacheco,” said the shorter of the twain, in whom it is easy to recognise the ungainly figure of Gonçalez,—“ I tell thee that in proportion as his expenditure exceeds his apparent income, the more plenteous appear his supplies. Who ever knew d'Ercilia deficient, when a bribe was required to carry on any of his schemes ?—’tis because golden showers are ever pouring from his hands, that he has only to will a thing and ’tis done,—believe me he must have resources to supply his munificence, which thou, and I know not of.”

“ Perhaps his powerful mind, which surely never found its equal, hath discovered the philosopher’s stone,” quoth Pacheco, with such an attempt at a sneer as a superstitious housewife, who would fain appear sceptical, might assume whilst relating some portentous dream.

“ Perhaps so !” replied Gonçalez, with a grim smile, for all science was treated by him with scorn.”

“ But, an’ such luck befal him, the univer-

sal elixir must follow, than which, I could wish nothing better ; for one draught of it administered to our old King Alphonso, would relieve me of many a twinge I suffer, when the thought occurs to me that Don Pedro must one day be our sovereign."

"Curse your '*one days*'!"—exclaimed Pacheco, impatiently,—“let us rather think what is to become of us *now*! But for Caelho's liberality, I were penniless ; and thou art scarce better, thou sayest."

"'Tis true, by my faith ! but I have hopes to obtain the vacant office, to which, as I was telling thee, the count hath promised to procure my appointment."

"But, Don Alvaro, thou hast not the habits of business and punctuality which it will require."

"What of that ? I can procure some varlet whom I will pay with a tenth part of the salary, and the remainder will relieve my most pressing needs."

“How long is it since we spoke so freely of Caelho?” whispered Pacheco between his set teeth,—“behold he is scarcely ten paces off us, and I would not risk a broken poitrel that he read not at the first glance the import of our conversation!”

Gonçalez, without raising his eyes from the ground, turned towards a rustic seat, whereon rested an aged man, whom they had passed and repassed several times, without vouchsafing him more regard than they gave the bench on which he sat. Now, however, as a convenient vehicle for diverting from themselves the searching eyes, of which Pacheco, at least, stood in superstitious awe, Gonçalez addressed the aged stranger. He was very old, and nearly bald, the few straggling locks that clustered round his neck being, with his flowing beard, as white as snow. His garments were coarse, and of most homely form, and a strong staff supported his embrowned hands, as his calm eyes dwelt with an abstracted gaze on the river that rolled its ceaseless waves

before him. "Good day, father!" said Gonzalez.

The old man gravely scanned the two dissipated and irreverent nobles, but with a glance that appeared to read their souls; then gently answered: "I thank ye, señors, but blessed be the Eternal Ruler! I never knew a bad day."

"Indeed! thou hast then been more fortunate than thy exterior would indicate, from which I should have supposed thou hadst never seen prosperous ones!"

"Greatly wouldst thou err, didst thou so believe, señor; for all my life hath been most prosperous."

"I cry thee mercy,—but an' thy words be true, thou art an exception to the common lot of humanity."

"My words are most true, and if all mankind do not resemble me, the fault is with themselves."

"How can that be?—who rules his own destiny? I tell thee what, Pacheco, methinks

that said stone of which thou didst but now discourse so learnedly, must be concealed here." Pacheco frowned, for the Count d'Ercilia that instant joined them. "Welcome, señor," continued Gonçalez; "we have a wonderful discovery here!—this venerable mendicant (for such I presume him to be) hath found the philosopher's stone, or at least something as good."

"Peace! Gonçalez," said Pacheco, "and let us hear, if it may be, the good man's science.—Well, father, and will ye instruct us *how* all mankind could arrive at thy good fortune, were they but willing?"

"You wished me good day, but now, señors; and I truly replied that a bad day I had never known, for every day that my Heavenly Father giveth me is full of richest bounty, and inestimable good.—You doubted if I had ever seen prosperous times, and I assured you such had been my whole life;—my words were truth, for whether the day bring heat or cold, labour or watching, poverty or hunger, all suffice to enable

me to accumulate increased wealth in that land where I am endeavouring to garner up a treasure for eternity ! *Thus*, O ye thoughtless nobles ! do I welcome each day with blessings,—since all that happens thereon is by God's appointment, and cannot but tend to my everlasting good ! And now do ye, in turn, answer me,—might not all mankind thus go on their way rejoicing ?”

“How can ye listen to a dotard's tale ?” asked Caelho, sternly, while that bitter sneer curled his fierce lip that never failed to chill the gazer's heart.

“'Twould be well for thee, señor,” said the old man, mildly, “wert *thou* too inclined to lend an ear ;—but thy heart, alas ! is hardened, and one of these is too much like thee ;—for the other,—though steeped in crime, 'tis rather that of weakness than of malignity.”

“Thinkest thou,” replied the count, the sudden flash gleaming beneath his bent brows,—“thinkest thou that spirits which are formed to rule their kind, heed the vain phantasies with

which the brute multitude are kept in obedience?"

"If, señor, thy irreverent speech allude to the soother of humanity's severest ills, the heaven-bestowed gift—religion,—hear my reply: I know there are reasoning beings that exist without its aids;—the angels, who being perfect require them not; and the fiends, who cannot participate in them, being all malice and malignity;—oh, be assured, the man who despises them, resembles *one* of these!" As the old man concluded, he arose, and supporting his feeble steps with his staff, slowly walked away; whilst the three nobles, not attempting to detain him, looked after him in silence. Gonçalves at length turning to Caelho, felt a grim joy at his heart, on perceiving the teeth of the count set, and his eye sternly fixed on the receding form of the monitor, as though his spirit yet quailed beneath a rebuke, that sounded trebly severe from lips so mild; and he could not restrain a smile, as he archly said,—“Thou *hast* it, señor!”

"And thou *hast it too*, my friend," retorted Caelho sharply; "I wish thee joy of thy coveted appointment!"

"Ha! is it decided?—thanks, thanks for the welcome news! Yes, thy influence secured, I doubted not my suit would prevail!"

"Pshaw!" replied Caelho,—“and what if it hath *not* prevailed?"

"What mean ye, señor?"

"I mean that *thou* hast it!—hast a palpable hit, good friend,—a fair and seemly buffet in the very face, from the hand of this fair Castilian, that so supremely rules our prince! Out upon thee, man!—thinkest thou aught but a native of Spain may fill any post in the gift of Don Pedro?"

"Thou canst not mean that a stranger hath been preferred to me!"

"By my father's soul but I do! another of this tribe of beggars who come by swarms to appropriate the few good things which the reforming Dennis hath left for the comfort of us nobles!"

Aye aye,—gaze at each other,—'tis Pacheco's disappointment repeated. Now have ye each been valued, and estimated at far less worth than a roving Spaniard. Ye had best stable your steeds together in future, for ye must look in vain for place or state pension whilst the Infant is ruled by this crafty Castilian,—what may be the case when he is king, 'tis not so easy to foresee." D'Ercilia closely watched the countenance of Gonçalez as he uttered these taunting words, and saw enough to be convinced that he had truly estimated, when he believed him one who would not, like Pacheco, quietly brook so galling a disappointment.

The harsh features of the noble grew dark as night,—he replied not for some moments to the words of his compeer, and his voice was sternly calm, when at length he said,—“Now what would I not give to be avenged on this imperious dame, who dares to thrust her ruined countrymen across my path?”

“An' thou wert resolved,” muttered Caelho,

in low, harsh tones, "thy revenge were nigh at hand !"

"Dost thou doubt me?" vociferated Gonçalez, giving vent to his restrained fury ; "here is my hand,—show me but the way to resent this wrong, and Don Alvaro Gonçalez is the slave of thy bidding !"

Caelho seized his proffered clasp, and turning to Pacheco, said,—“Wilt thou too join us !—or tamely behold the proud race of Castile lord it over the best blood of Portugal ?”

“I am, as hitherto, of your fellowship,” replied Pacheco,—what you dare, I dare likewise.”

Their hands were clasped in most unholy league, and a dark and solemn vow, sworn by each, sealed their compact. “Now come with me to my dwelling,” said the count ; “I have a witness there that shall do more to aid our cause than aught chance ever placed in our way before. The king too is now infuriated by a message just received from Don Pedro, refusing to sanction the treaty of marriage which the

king is anxious to conclude. Alphonso attributes his obstinacy to the fascinations of the Castilian ; and this, together with the witness, of whom I told you, and whom a little schooling will render perfect to our purpose, shall accomplish our utmost wishes."

" Go we, then, now to the king ?"

" No, no, my friends, not now ; did I not say our witness must be schooled ? And we, also, must have our parts perfect, ere we essay that, the success or failure of which must make or blast us. Besides, the king must be so wrought, as to strike ere reflection cool his fury ; for, whilst blinded with rage, he will be but a tool in our hands. To ensure this, however, the resolve and its effects must quickly follow each other,—and for such prompt action the time is not yet quite ripe. No !—to-morrow, to-morrow !—Yes," he added,—and his voice resembled nothing human,—“ to-morrow brings the hour when our vengeance shall fall at last !” The count's face grew livid, his lips bloodless, whilst his hand

clutched convulsively at the hilt of his blade. After a moment of intense agitation, his lips moved, but emitted no sound,—nor was it till after one or two efforts to speak, that he dismissed his associates, by requesting them to meet him at his palace in an hour's time. Not sorry were they to quit their tempter, the workings of whose countenance made him far more resemble a fallen spirit than a mortal sinner.

D'Ercilia followed their retreating forms with his eyes, until distance and the intervening trees hid them from his sight; then turning, slowly departed in a contrary direction. A low chuckle shook his frame, as folding his arm in his short cloak, and dropping his chin on his breast, he slowly paced along the margin of the river, and none being nigh to interrupt his soliloquy, he gave vent in low and muttered words to the dark thoughts that were weaving their web of mischief within his malignant bosom.

“Ha! ha! the accursed fools! to dream that d'Ercilia cares whether they prosper or be over-

whelmed in ruin! That Pacheco is my tool I exult not,—he was ready to the service of any master-spirit that cared to bend its lofty nature to the use of a thing so mean. But that the crafty, the shrewd Gongalez should be so assuredly mine, is indeed a triumph! And so—they think I am anxious to procure *them* the opportunity of avenging their paltry disappointments! Fools! they know not the long-nursed hate that hath been for years accumulating in this bosom,—gathering fresh impulse from every new tale with which the country teems, of the happiness of Pedro in his Eden of Beira. Happiness won by my discomfiture!—But I registered an oath,—not in heaven,—of such vows no register is kept *there*; nor matters it where, save that 'tis deeply graven on this heart;—yes, I breathed a vow when she eluded me so feately, on that detested morn, when relying on the promise of a crowned king I went to receive the contract for my espousals, went decked out as a bridegroom, and beheld the scarcely suppressed titter of the assembled court, which

witnessed my discomfiture ! That was *her* hour of triumph ! And now,—aye even now hastens on the fleet wing of time *my* hour ! Speed on ! speed on ! ye lingering moments, for never did love yearn more ardently for the long-deferred meeting, than doth Caelho for that which shall satiate his hatred, and his revenge !”

CHAPTER V.

"Think in her silent bower she waits thee now
With the same glow of heart and bloom of brow
As when ye parted there,—thine, all thine only,
Like the one star above thee, bright and lonely."

Moore.

BRIGHTLY and joyously dawned that eventful morning, for whose rising many had kept impatient watch ; but none with more ardent anticipations of delight, than the gallant prince, who with a buoyant heart viewed the preparations for the sports he loved.

Even De Lacy's impatience of the friendly detention, which prolonged his painful suspense, gave way to his passion for the chase, as the deep bayings of the full-voiced hounds broke upon his matin slumbers ; and when he joined the group

in the court-yard, and by the dim light of the scarcely awakened dawn, discussed with his royal host, and Ruyz del Pulgar, the various preparations for the chase, or with an admiring and practised eye, examined horses, dogs, and weapons; he caught the joyous infection in which all around him, human and brute, participated, and entered with all the eager enthusiasm of his ardent nature, into the sports of the day.

Ere yet the grey dawn had been quite dispelled by the rays of the risen sun, the bell of the small chapel summoned them to that service, which being celebrated at an unusually early hour, (in order that the sportsmen may not miss their morning duty,) is called "the hunter's mass."

For some time a deep silence fell upon the scene, but just before all uproar and busy preparation; and it was only broken by the occasional baying of some eager hound, or the neigh of an impatient steed. This solemn duty performed, the already caparisoned horses were eagerly

mounted, the hounds led forth, and all but the splendid steed of Don Pedro, which the groom at the bridle with difficulty restrained, appeared ready to start.

The prince had withdrawn to bid farewell to his consort.—“How is it, my love,” he said, as Inez clung to his bosom, “that we find it so difficult to part, though but for a brief time? Ah, if thy fair face grow pale at this momentary separation, with what feelings wouldst thou arm me for mortal combat?”

“Alas, I know not!” murmured Inez, “but surely not with more dismay and fear than haunts me now! Ah! when thou quittest me, ’tis ever thus,—my heart sinks as though our parting were to be eternal!—But this is weakness,”—she added after a pause, and raising her head from the shoulder of her lord, she continued:—“and thus I dismiss it,—go, my beloved! my all! This too apprehensive love of mine shall not longer detain thee from thy favourite pastime. Go!—may God and his holy angels guard thee!”

Withdrawing herself from his arms, she gazed on him with sad and earnest eyes, and with a faint attempt to smile, motioned him to depart.

The prince had reached the door, but returning, folded his wife to his bosom once more, and smilingly observed : “ We might be youthful lovers, Inez, or at least parting for a term of years ! One kiss more, my love, and I am gone ! ” Her marble brow received the parting kiss,—and when she again raised her eyes, he had disappeared. Ah, Pedro ! mayest thou never vainly yearn in after years to recall that hour ! Donna Inez approached the window, and from the open casement watched her husband mount his impatient steed, to which ere he gave the rein, his quick eye recognised the graceful outline of the rounded arm which admonished him by the waving of her kerchief that the glance of his beloved was on him still. The plumed cap was raised in answer to the signal, and again and again the prince turned to repeat the distant greeting, until the intervening space denied him to her strained gaze.

"Why sinks my heart thus?" exclaimed Inez, with a sigh, as she turned from the casement. "Bring hither my children, Sanchiza; their merry wiles will chase away the gloom which oppresses me."

Meanwhile, their bounding steeds bore the joyous hunters far from that royal dwelling, and the sharp mountain breezes quickened the circulation of their blood, and braced their hardy frames. Soon were they all, with hearty good will, eagerly engaged in pursuing their exhilarating sport; nor did De Lacy fail to sustain his country's fame for agility, and skill, and prowess. Moreover, in accordance with his wishes, it so chanced, that the chase led them not far from the direction, in which his thoughts wandered; and when the hunters paused to partake their sylvan meal, and enjoy their noontide rest, he descried within the wide range commanded from his elevated position, the peaked serra which sheltered the sweet valley wherein nestled the dwelling of Abu Amir. Brief rest took he, and but for the

expostulations of Don Pedro, would have altogether defied the fierce rays of noon; but notwithstanding the impatience that consumed him, he parted not without regret from the gallant prince, whom none, unless all evil, could know and not esteem.

And now at the utmost speed the unequal road enabled them to command, De Lacy and his attendants crossed mount and valley; and heedless of the innumerable interesting objects which he passed, the knight ever strained his eyes to obtain a glimpse of those white walls, which had for years haunted his feverish dreams.

But when at length he approached the embowered quinta, doubts and fears crowded his boding heart. "Doth she live?—doth she remember me? or hath she reluctantly yielded to her father's wishes, and entered the harem of one of his fellow-countrymen?" Each moment that brought the youth nearer the spot he had so long desired to reach, increased the poignancy of his misgivings, and at length springing from his

horse, and giving it in charge to one of his followers, he threaded his way through overgrown and tangled shrubs, to the engirdled wall which he well remembered as the fence of Azayda's garden. In a few moments the knight had ascended one of the giant trees that overlooked that little paradise, but for some moments believed he had mistaken the spot. Flowers were indeed still there, but all uncultured and untrained,—the turfy walks were unshorn,—the parterres choked with weeds, the arbours overgrown and wild,—the shaded paths a tangled wilderness. He gazed towards that fairy bower wherein he saved Azayda from the blow of the assassin ;—the light balcony alone was there, for the ever-open windows had disappeared, the wall being continuous with the remainder of the building. Nought remained as he had seen it last, save the perpetual fountain, which like a mourning Naiad, seemed to weep its ceaseless tears for the desolation that had fallen on that little Eden.

A cold chill crept over the warrior's heart as he gazed around, for he was overpowered by a painful surprise which almost annihilated his hopes. Descending from the tree, he ordered his followers to remain stationary, and alone approached the vestibule of the Moorish dwelling.

There, the desolation that spoke of death, or at least an absence that must be eternal, he found not ;—one or two slaves loitered about the portal, in much the same listless manner as in former years, and one aged figure, who, supported by a staff, was in the act of leaving the quinta, raised his eyes on hearing the clank of the knight's armour ; and though somewhat more touched by time than when he last beheld him, Sir Alfred recognised the faithful Manuel. In an instant De Lacy had grasped his withered hand.—“ *Thou here ?*” he cried—“ all then may yet be well !” and supporting the old man's tottering steps, he led him with an impatience more in accordance with his own

eager youth, than the failing powers of the infirm slave, from the porch of the Moorish dwelling.

“Thou knowest me, Manuel,—I see by thine eyes thou hast not forgotten De Lacy.”

“In truth, sir knight, thou art one whom it is not easy to forget! Surely joy dawneth at last for my good master?”

“He is still, then, here?”

“Certainly.”

“And thy fair lady?—what of her?—wilt thou not speak?—Alas! good Manuel, where is thy pupil,—where is Azayda?”

“Why, considering the urgency of thy inquiry, señor, methinks thou hast been long in making it.”

“Ah, Manuel, couldst thou know all I have suffered during this enforced absence, thou wouldst have spared me this pain. Prolong not the suspense which has already tortured me almost to phrenzy—but say, is Azayda here?”

“She is, indeed.”

“ And well,—and happy ?”

“ She is too gentle to complain.”

“ Ah that I had earlier learned her history !
Why didst thou conceal from me that she was a
Christian ?”

“ Because I feared thy ardent but unreflecting
nature ; and believed her work *here*, not
done.”

“ Is it now nigher its completion ?”

“ I can scarcely say—Abu Amir is unacquainted with her faith—for she hath as yet merely continued the work she found begun, gradually infusing by her gentle converse and example, the maxims of Christian morality into the mind of her sire. The glorious work hath indeed progressed but slowly,—yet is it surely prospering. Beware, young man, lest thou mar the patient labour of years !”

“ Say, rather, I come to hasten the crisis that has been sufficiently long deferred.”

“ Perhaps it may be so,—Heaven's will be done ! we are but its weak instruments ! Proceed

sir knight, and may thy angelic guardian prompt, and aid thee !" The old slave turned away, and De Lacy hastened towards the quinta.

Whilst De Lacy rejoiced the gentle Moor by his presence, which was as welcome as unexpected; Manuel was fortunate in finding Azayda alone in one of the gardens of the quinta, which being entirely surrounded by buildings, had been devoted to her use since her father's fears of the murderous Gitano had caused her own loved bowers to be deserted.

By slow degrees Manuel imparted to her the arrival of him whose image had been enshrined in her young heart, with an unwavering, though nearly hopeless fidelity. During the long, long dreary days that had slowly elapsed since they parted, to none had she ventured to speak of her absent knight; and even when her father occasionally alluded to the gallant youth who had broken on his solitude like a bright evanescent dream, the young girl ever shunned the theme. But often when Manuel at her request narrated

the history of some Christian pair, whose love outlasted long years of separation or distrust, and whose unswerving constancy conquered the most formidable obstacles ; a dim hope would flutter around her heart, that one so generous and truthful, might yet return. With the trustfulness of a heart which found within itself a warrant for its confidence, did she cling to the memory of those fervent words with which he whispered his last adieu ; though, remembering the dangers of war,—the daily perils of those who love knightly deeds,—and the blandishments of bright eyes and sunny looks,—she scarcely dared to hope that De Lacy might escape them all. Vain, therefore, was the care of Manuel, for the instant he named (for the first time since they parted at the mountain convent,) the name of De Lacy, her heart anticipated the old man's communication. "He is returned !" she murmured—"he is here !" and the pallor that overspread her cheek, and the trembling weakness that unnerved her frame, betrayed the secret,

of which none but Manuel had ever dreamed. And when at length, the tumult of surprise and joy having somewhat subsided, she extorted from the old man every circumstance of the recent meeting, and made him repeat each word Sir Alfred had uttered, she sighed: "Ah me!—for whilst the meanest slave in my father's household may listen to his voice, and behold him without reproach,—to me alone it is forbidden to welcome my preserver!"

"Such is indeed the foolish custom of the people to whom thou art allied by birth, though by grace and vocation separated for ever."

"Tell me, then, what is my duty as a Christian maiden?"

"Obedience, in all that is not sin."

Azayda's further inquiries were prevented by the approach of Houadir, to explain whose mission it will be necessary to return to De Lacy.

Not long, after the first greetings were past, could De Lacy defer obeying the impulse of

those feelings which had brought him to Portugal. He at once unfolded to Abu Amir the adverse circumstances, which had been suddenly reversed by the decease of his unfaithful guardian ;— and having stated with his usual candour, the exact position he occupied in his native land, concluded his long narrative by asking the scarce hoped-for boon,—the hand of the fair Azayda.

Abu Amir listened with grave and wondering attention, but when the concluding prayer fell on his ear, he started, and regarded the young Christian with unqualified amazement. It was some moments ere he answered the bold petitioner, and the tones of his voice were cold and somewhat haughty as he at length replied : “ I know not which most excites my astonishment, sir knight ; that thy faith permitting thee but one spouse, thou shouldst seek her among our despised race ; or that thou deemest me capable of bestowing the sole representative of a house at least as noble as that of any Frankish knight in Christendom, upon an alien to my faith and country.”

This reply did not surprise De Lacy; who, determined on testing to the utmost his chances of winning his beloved from her Moslem sire, answered with redoubled earnestness: "Too well do I know, O noble Moor! that, for an infidel and Christian to be joined in holy wedlock were an idea too preposterous to be for a moment entertained. But, call to mind thine own early and constant affection, and scorn not to compare with it the attachment I have so long and faithfully preserved; then ponder well whether some means may not be devised to remove that one great obstacle to our union,—if, as I have the presumption to believe, Abu Amir sees no other reason to think me unworthy of his child."

"I confess to thee," replied the Moor, in more cordial tones,—for an idea most gratifying to the prejudices of his education was awakened by the words of the young Christian;—"I confess to thee that I have never owed to mortal man such vast obligations as thou hast conferred

upon me; nor ever, — no! not even among mine own race,—known one more worthy of my esteem. And if (as from thy words I may venture to hope possible) thou wilt embrace the Moslem faith, I shall indeed rejoice to behold my Azayda thine.”

The angry blood mounted to De Lacy's brow, —for no greater insult than such a proposition could have been offered to a Christian knight,—but he mastered the involuntary indignation, and calmly replied: “Ere answering such a proposal, Sir Moor, let me hear from the lips of the fair Azayda, that she would accept me on those terms; for well I know thou wouldst be as averse from bestowing, as I from receiving a reluctant hand.”

Delighted to find his suggestion received with such unexpected forbearance, Abu Amir summoned a slave by his wonted signal, and a message was instantly conveyed to the wondering Houadir, commanding the immediate presence of Azayda before her father.

How throbbed the heart of De Lacy, who had seized this most unlooked-for chance of obtaining an interview with the closely-guarded fair; when, folded in her long white veil, Azayda entered the room, and bowing low before her father's chair, stood motionless beside him ! No sign of recognition or surprise could De Lacy's eye discover, and, save for a tremulous motion which agitated her veil, she might have been a robed statue, so still did she stand beside her sire.

"She knows me not," thought De Lacy, "or her memory of me hath none of that tenderness which exists for her in my bosom." The recollection of their parting now arose with vivid distinctness to his mind.—"The cruel restraints of her cheerless existence have chilled her young heart, till all its fervour hath changed to apathy," he inly thought, and the eloquent blood forsook his cheek and lip, as, with mournful earnestness, he gazed on that silent and veiled form.

After the grave pause which usually preceded his communications, Abu Amir addressed his

child: "I have sent for thee, my Azayda, in compliance with the prayer of this young Frank, to ask thee if thou wouldst receive him as thy spouse, provided he embrace the Moslem faith for thy love?"

No longer silent or motionless was that veiled form: "Can it be possible?" she exclaimed, —her faint and trembling tones half choked in the utterance,—“is this the prayer that De Lacy hath come so far to prefer?"

"Answer me, my child,—I have never sought to thwart thy wishes,—answer me!"

"Father," replied the maid,—and her accents, at first low and broken, grew stronger as she proceeded,—“I thank thy ever indulgent love, —yes, beloved parent! the gratitude Azayda owes to thee is indeed boundless; and, believe me, thy kindness was never more available to her than now,—for far more dreadful,”—and the sweet voice became once more faint, and a touching melancholy deepened its tones as she continued,—“oh! a thousand-fold more to be abhorred

were an apostate, who could, for a selfish motive, consent to deny his Redeemer, than even the voluptuous emir, from the degrading slavery of whose harem he so gallantly rescued me !”

“ And now hear *me*, Azayda,” cried De Lacy, throwing himself at her feet, and the light of renewed hope, caught from her tones of deepest feeling, once more illumining his fine countenance :—“ And now hear me, intrepid and faithful maid ! and forgive the innocent artifice which hath procured me this interview. What sayest thou, ever-loved Azayda ! if De Lacy can explain to thy satisfaction the cause of his torturing absence,—if he assure thee, that even his love for thee, though forming a portion of his being, has been, and is, powerless to tempt him to falsehood and infamy ! What sayest thou to De Lacy’s suit, if, firm in his glorious faith, he woos thee to join all thy hopes for time and eternity with his ?” Azayda gazed from the kneeling knight to her father, whose countenance furnished not the slightest

clue to the feelings with which he listened to the lover's prayer. "If," she murmured, "I might dare to hope that my father sanctions thy words."—

"Say on,—I implore thee say on!"

"Ah, De Lacy—seest thou not!" she cried, pointing to Abu Amir, who now, pale, and aghast with horror, regarded his child with a wild and fearful gaze—"Look, look!—Alas! 'tis all in vain."

"Remember the warning thou wearest in thy bosom," exclaimed a deep and solemn voice which made all start;—and as De Lacy sprung to his feet and looked around to ascertain whence it proceeded,—Manuel, calm and majestic, and with the meek yet lofty port of a warning prophet, entered the room. He approached the seat of Abu Amir, and addressing Asayda, said:—"Now is thy time to speak!—choose for eternity!"

"Blessed art thou! my true friend,"—she cried; "thou who art ever nigh to aid Asay-

da's weakness!" and flinging aside her veil, she displayed the beautiful countenance (now pale and full of apprehension) which had so long haunted De Lacy's dreams.

She sunk on her knees before her father, and crossing her fair hands meekly on her bosom, without daring to raise to his, her tender eyes, she with a low but firm voice addressed him;—"Know, O beloved and revered author of my being! that, not for the love of this noble knight, though next to thine his image hath long been enshrined in this heart,—but for truth's sake, and for, that I believe myself immortal,—Azayda hath been for years in faith, and—as far as she might—in practice, a Christian!"

Abu Amir started as if stung by a poisoned dart, but though she heard his fruitless efforts to address her, Azayda still knelt with downcast eyes, pale and motionless, before him. With difficulty the Moor at length ejaculated in tones of extreme anguish,—“Is it the child of Amina,

who thus dares avow herself shameless and recreant?"

Azayda drew from her bosom the small packet which had rested there so many years, and having pressed it respectfully to her eyes, whence the tears now flowed unrestrainedly, she extended it towards her father, saying,—“Behold my mother’s legacy!—Houadir will tell thee it was suspended to my neck by the hand of thy Amina. It is written indeed in a Christian language, but when on attaining my fourteenth year I procured it to be read for me, (as directed to do on the cover,) I wrote a translation thereof, which thou wilt find therein. Read it, O my father,—procure other translations, and compare them with mine,—and oh, may Heaven’s blessing soften thy heart, and reveal to thee the truths it fain would teach thee. Yes, read it, and thou shalt find that if I have been unmindful of *thy* teachings,—I have yet a parent’s sanction to strengthen mine own convictions.”

Abu Amir eagerly took the document, tore off its cover, and recognising the character of his deceased wife, pressed it repeatedly to his lips.

At that moment De Lacy was summoned from the room and informed that one who would not be denied demanded an instant interview with him, at the door of the quinta.

In a very few moments the Christian knight and his attendants had chosen steeds from the stables of Abu Amir, and leaving in their place their own wearied beasts, galloped away with headlong haste.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh, let us supplicate him, dearest mother !
Quick ! quick ! here's no abiding-place for us.
Here every coming hour broods into life
Some new affrightful monster."

Schiller.

ERE continuing the course of our narrative, we must return to early morning, and enter the palace of Alphonso.

The king paced his stately chamber with disordered steps, and before his regal chair, which was slightly moved from its usual position, as if he had quitted it with tumultuous haste, knelt a slight female form. Her head was bowed on her fair hands, and half-smothered sobs burst from her gentle bosom ; but Alphonso, heedless of her agitation, exclaimed with harsh and passionate accents :—" I tell thee, *thou* at

least shalt obey me ! But yester e'en thy brother confirmed his former rejections of the alliances I proposed to him :—besotted fool ! to thus waste his days idly doting on a syren who robs him of the noblest prospects the most ambitious fancy could devise ! But *thou* art under no such dominion, and I will be heedful that thy sickly longings for the dim and silent cloister, shall be dispelled by a royal bridegroom ; for Alphonso's daughter *must* be far better fitted to rule a court than warble in a choir."

" Alas, my liege," murmured the princess, raising towards him her tearful eyes, " didst thou but know how my heart has for years revolted from the hollow and fickle pleasures of a deceitful world ; how it shrinks from encountering its treacheries, its disappointments, and yearns for the calm and quietude and unbroken peace of a life of piety and usefulness, surely thou wouldst from mere pity reconsider thine award ?"

" I reconsider nothing, pining girl ! my decision, once made, is irrevocable,—and my will.

in the present instance, is, that thou cheerfully accept the royal spouse whom I have provided for thee. Begone, and let thy piety teach thee obedience !”

The princess withdrew, and almost at the same moment an opposite door to that by which she quitted the audience-chamber opened, and a delicate boy of slight form and pale countenance bounded into the presence of the king. As the child kissed his extended hand, the dark brow of Alphonso unbent, and his stern features relaxed into a smile ; for he beheld the idol of his declining days—his grandson Ferdinand. “Well ! my gallant boy,” he said, as resuming his seat, he drew the youthful prince to his knee,—“and how wears the day with thee ?”

“ Was it not Donna Maria who quitted thee as I entered, grandsire ?”

“ Yes, boy.”

“ I wish she had tarried a little space, for I would beseech her highness to embroider me a baldric.”

“Why, what use hast thou for such martial garniture?”

“Ah, my liege, I shall soon be seven years old,—may I not then wear a sword? for as I shall be accountable for my actions, be sure I will not slay any one without just cause.”

“Nay, it is not injury to another that is so much to be apprehended by thy carrying a sword, as harm to thyself,” replied the king, with a smile.

“Am I not a prince?” answered the boy proudly,—“why then should I be suspected of using a sword as might a peasant boy his provender knife?”

“Thou hast at least the spirit of thy race; and we will consider of thy request. But inquire who waits in the antechamber,—an audience has been asked of us ere noon.”

A page entered, on the summons of the prince, and after duly announcing them, gave place to the Count d'Ercilia and his two friends; who having made their obeisance to the king, stood with heavy and discontented looks before him.

Alphonso regarded them for some moments in silence, then said, as he drew his grandson more closely to his side, and surrounded him with his arm,—“ Well, nobles,—you have some heavy complaint to urge, it seems,—let us hear it, in Heaven's name !”

“ Most just and noble king !” commenced Caelho, “ my brother hidalgos have elected me as their voice, though *my* grievance rests entirely on the fact of the injuries *they* complain of. We come, O gracious sovereign, to beseech thy interference on behalf of our suffering country, the best interests of which are endangered by the poisonous counsels of a stranger, who hath intruded into the royal household and obtained paramount influence over the will and judgment of thy son, the Infant.”

“ Ha !” exclaimed Alphonso, starting forward in his chair, and gazing on Caelho with a searching glance.

“ The king,” continued the count, unflinchingly enduring that look of intense scrutiny,

has not to be informed of the shameful attachment indulged in by the Infant, which renders him the slave of the imperious will of an artful Castilian, from whose pernicious fascination I made many efforts, some years ago, to disenthral him.

“As long as the irregular partiality injured only himself, however much I might lament, I presumed not to interfere ; and though I deeply felt the injustice by which I had been defrauded of my promised bride, I deigned not to complain. Now, however, that the interests of my country, the claims of my compeers, and I greatly fear, yet more sacred rights, are periled by this frantic passion of our prince ; I am compelled to arouse from my tame submission, and call on thee, O king, to deliver Portugal of an insidious and scarcely suspected foe, who threatens to undermine most effectually her growing prosperity.

“That the influence of Spain, and particularly of Castile, is hateful to the Portuguese, is the inevitable consequence of the unceasing attempts

that have been made by that country to render this its tributary. What wonder then, my liege, that we behold with suspicion the tendency manifested in a certain royal mind to favour Spanish interests, and infuse its politics into our counsels? Within the last few weeks two Castilian refugees have been selected in preference to these loyal nobles, (whose families have long and faithfully served the house of Braganza,) to fill two posts, which, if not of the most important nature, were honourable and lucrative.

“ But our present wrongs, though amply sufficient to arouse the indignation of the people, are yet nothing compared with what we may apprehend when Heaven shall receive our beloved sovereign; the dread of whom alone, we are persuaded, prevents Don Pedro from disgracing his high lineage, by attempting a marriage with this frail dictatress. And who knows but the spirit of Livia may exist in her haughty bosom? — Who can say she cherishes not for her spurious offspring as fervent an affection as that which

urged the Roman dame to exterminate the family of Drusus in order to raise Tiberius to the imperial throne?" The artful speaker pointed, as he thus breathed forth his insidious aspersions to the young Ferdinand, who leaning on his grandsire's knee, regarded the nobles with looks which seemed unable to comprehend the full import of their dark and ominous words, though they filled his soul with an undefined sense of threatened danger.

Alphonso drew the royal boy closer to his bosom, and as d'Ercilia's dark gaze, revealing thoughts too horrible for utterance, met his, he drew with difficulty his lightened breath, and hoarsely said:—"And what wouldst thou then at our hands?"

"That thou arouse thyself, O king, and act with thy wonted justice, both towards the helpless of thine own royal race, and towards thy confiding people. Thou,—the protector of both,—thou alone canst save them from this cruel syren;—but permit her to survive thee, and they are the victims of her ambition."

"Thou mayest retire, Ferdinand," said the king, kissing the boy's pale brow, who, after looking earnestly in his face for an instant, without remark, slowly obeyed.

Thick and heavy were the drops that burst over Alphonso's brow as he watched the receding figure of his grandson; and when he had disappeared, he addressed his cunning counsellor.

"Thou knowest our exasperation against this presumptuous dame has been increased within the last few hours, by Don Pedro's refusal to ally himself by marriage in accordance with our wishes. We had not supposed anything would have been added thereto,—yet thy words are as oil to flame! But, we would pause ere rushing to the fearful extremity, to which thy charge urges us;—a mere surmise, however plausible, may not suffice to certify that this Castilian is so very a fiend, as to harbour thoughts threatening the welfare of our beloved Ferdinand. Count! thou knowest not Alphonso," and his face became flushed and his voice vehement, as he violently

struck the table beside him ;—" I tell thee, thou knowest us not, if thou dreamest that such a charge, if substantiated, will not draw down horrible vengeance on the guilty head !—But to the proofs—to the proofs ; thou art not wont to proceed on slight grounds ; answer me !"

" Thy shrewd and penetrating mind, my liege, guesses the truth ! This morning a peasant solicited an audience of me, and with trembling limbs and agitated looks, imparted a conversation he overheard in the gardens of the Infant's quinta near Coimbra, which appeared to my poor judgment to involve a dark and hideous scheme that curdled my blood with horror. But by the king's leave, the man shall himself narrate what he saw and heard,—he awaits in the anteroom."

" Bring him hither instantly," said Alphonso.

" But first let me remind my liege that he is but a simple hind, and totally unacquainted with the usages of courts."

" If he be rough as an untrained bear, he is welcome, for the tidings he bringeth."

‘ Let the peasant Mateo enter,” said the count, addressing the page who waited in the royal antechamber ; and in obedience to the summons, a figure trimly arrayed in a peasant’s garb, but of slovenly gait and wild expression of feature, which was not lessened by the overpowering consciousness of being in the presence of royalty,—entered the king’s chamber.

To any who had ever beheld him in his native garb,—notwithstanding his disguise and the careful trimming of his hair, beard, and shaggy brows, the grinning laugh, even now not entirely suppressed, would instantly have betrayed the Gitano Gheran. He was safe from detection, however, for (excepting Caelho) by the eyes that now regarded him, he had never been beheld in the native costume.

He made an awkward obeisance to the king, and Caelho said,—“ Now repeat, in this august presence, what thou didst narrate to me this morning. Thou wert in the garden of the quinta near Coimbra, which is Don Pedro’s favourite residence, the evening before last ?”

“ Yes, I was ; and it took me from that time till this morning to reach Lisbon, for I walked all the way.”

“ Why didst thou not procure a macho, since thou believedst thy information so important ?”

“ I had spent all my savings in going from my native village, Tras-os-Montes, to Coimbra, and it was fortunate that I brought plenty of provender with me, or my curiosity would have cost me dear.”

“ What was thy motive for undertaking so long a journey ?”

“ To see this wonderful lady whom report says rules the Infant like an empress !”

The king moved impatiently in his chair ;—Caelho continued his questioning,—“ And didst thou succeed ?”

“ Yes,—I stole into the royal gardens, and concealed myself for some hours there. The evening at length grew dim, and I began to think I should not succeed in seeing this wondrous beauty, when I heard voices, and contriving

a slight opening in the small thicket wherein I lay concealed, I perceived the Infant approaching. Him I easily recognised, having seen him some years ago when I came to Lisbon to sell some horses which my father reared, for he held a large casel not far from the Serra Penude and the river Balsemao. But it was the lady who walked beside Don Pedro that I most carefully noted; having gone all that way, as I said, on purpose. She was dressed in splendid robes that glittered all over with gold embroidery, and the jewels in her hair, and on her hands and boddice, attracted my eyes so much that I could not gaze from them to remark the far-famed charms that have captivated the Infant."

"Were they conversing?"

"Yes."

"Didst thou catch the import of their words?"

"When they approached near to me I did."

"Canst thou repeat them?"

A quick, cunning glance wandered to the

countenance of the king, as the Gitano replied :
“ They were speaking of the time when she should be crowned queen of Portugal.”

“ Ha !” interrupted Alphonso ;—then compressing his lips as if resolved to curb his gathering fury, he motioned him to proceed.

“ And the Infant promised her that all the nobles of the land should kneel at *her* feet instead of at *his*,—for he said he would set the example with his son Ferdinand, in that act of homage. She then said something about her children, and Don Pedro solemnly vowed, that whoever dared doubt their heirship of the throne should die. As for Ferdinand, whose image perpetually interfered with her peace, it should soon cease to trouble her, he said, when king Alphonso was dead. Much more was whispered on both sides, but to the same import ; and their steps, though very slow, soon took them so far from me that I could not distinctly catch their low-breathed words.”

“ Enough, enough !” muttered the king ; and

d'Ercilia forgot to continue his questioning, so deeply absorbed was he in watching the countenance of his sovereign ; who, pallid with rage, and agitated by dreadful thoughts, took no note of his scrutiny. At length Alphonso abruptly exclaimed,—“ But what proof have we, save the mere word of this unknown peasant, that his tale is true ? ”

“ Chance, O king,” replied the count,—“ or rather the Providence that watches over the destinies of princes, hath given him the means of satisfying those doubts, which naturally arise in your grace’s mind, as they did in mine, when I first heard this story.—Now proceed, Mateo,—what further hast thou to impart ? ”

Gheran fixed his wild eyes on the artful courtier, and proceeded :—“ When the curiosity which had occasioned my boldness was satisfied, I began to think how I must escape from a spot so well guarded, but in my haste to quit my place of concealment, I very nearly provoked the fate I was too eager to avoid ; for in rushing

from the spot, I ran against a monk, who was walking, book in hand, in a path I crossed. Believing I should certainly be by his means pursued, I flew as rapidly as I was able through the mazes of the plaisaunce, nor discovered till I paused for breath beyond the confines of the royal groves, that the iron clasp of the book which the monk had been reading, clung to a portion of my dress. My first anxious thought was how I should return the book to the good father; but when on reflecting on the conversation I had overheard, I became every moment more convinced that I was bound to reveal the danger which threatened the destruction of Don Ferdinand and the best hopes of Portugal, I felt that the manuscript so strangely obtained would confirm my tale. May it please the king to examine it." And Gheran opening his vest, produced the breviary of Father Anselm; which Caelho with a grim smile placed in the eager hands of the monarch.

In an age when books were so scarce and valu-

able, it was inevitable that the one now produced must strongly tend to remove any doubt of the verity of the artfully coloured tale so cunningly told by the Gitano. D'Ercilia pointed out to the sovereign the little slips of paper marking the various references to the offices of the day, and sufficiently indicating the moment when it left the hand of the religious.—He showed the pious motto written with the name of the owner at the commencement of the manuscript, and turning to the end, made the king remark the few words of the venerable scribe who had transcribed the whole, imploring the charitable prayers of whoever should use the work his patient labour had completed; and concluding by dating it at the Scriptarium of the Benedictine convent of Santa Clara in the Serra Carramella.

The patience of the king scarcely sufficed to finish the scrutiny, but when it was concluded, he started from his chair, foaming with rage,—the violence of the outburst being redoubled by

the efforts he had made to control it. Caelho, seizing the feigned Mateo by the shoulder, led him to the anteroom, and dismissed him.

But the cunning knave, curious to know what might follow from his handiwork, which he plainly saw would set on foot no child's play, went not far; he loitered unobserved in the neighbourhood of the palace.

Brief time passed ere he beheld the three nobles issue forth, preceded by one, who, though clad in complete armour, he rightly judged, by the deference they paid him, to be the king. Three troopers leading three powerful war-horses followed them, and at a rapid rate the whole took the northern road. "Now, by the breath of the free Rommany!" ejaculated Gheran with more gravity than was his wont to display—"I like it not!—As sure as the sun shineth above, there'll be sword-clashing for this!—To the frontier! to the frontier!—This land will soon be no abiding place for me, an' they who paid me so well, keep not good counsel!"

Eager to reach the Spanish border, the disguised Rommany pushed on ; but till long past noon, continued to keep the northern road, conscious that it afforded him the best means of attaining his object until it was joined by the road to Guarda.

As he proceeded he had occasional tidings of the horsemen whom he had seen leave the palace, and found that they continued their speed, and also the route that he had at first attributed to them. Now and then arose even to his callous mind, the memory of that fair and gentle form, which in look, dress, words, and intentions, he had (without thought of consequences) so foully belied ; and something like remorse troubled a heart, which, had it not been hardened by a life of unprincipled recklessness, must have bled to think of the wrong he had done to that innocent and royal lady. He wrestled, however, with the mere remnant of manly feeling that survived his pernicious training ; muttering the while,—“ Well, what matters it ?—they paid me well,—what had

I to do with their motive, or its consequences ?”

The heats of noon were disregarded by his hardy frame ; he paused not for them ; and a draught from a clear spring was all he needed to help him on a long day's journey. But the unwonted tumult in his mind rendered him parched and feverish, and he paused at a way-side estaglem, which, just as the heat began to lessen, he gladly reached, hoping to procure a draught of *Vino Verde*. Whilst seated on the bench at the front of the humble hostel, quaffing the light but agreeable wine ; a solitary horseman rode to the spot, and the wild eyes of the Gitano resumed their wonted twinkle, and his mouth its grin, as he regarded the countenance of the traveller. A feed of provender for his steed, a slight repast for himself, included all his wants ; both were soon disposed of, and remounting his destrier, he was about to depart, when Gheran on a stout macho, which, with its gay housings, he had just bought of the hostess, joined him. “ Thy horse's head,” said the Gitano, “ is turned the

way I am going—what hinders that we join company so far as our road lies together?”

“Not my speed,” replied the horseman, “since I have ample leisure for the journey that is before me.”

“Well, then, if thy steed will endure the fellowship of my macho, perhaps his master may not disdain its rider’s company,—so, as the proverb says, ‘two travel safer than one,’—let us e’en share such adventures as we may meet together.”

“Nay, as for danger, I fear none, nor care for other aid than mine own right arm, which, however, shall not be denied to thee an’ thou fearest to travel alone.”

“As thou wilt,—’twere shame to part for want of a motive for joining company; if none other be at hand, e’en for old acquaintance’ sake we might be content to jog side-by-side for such brief time as the fates and the business we have on hand permit us.”

The horseman, who, though completely armed,

wore his vizor up, regarded Gheran with a surprised look of scrutiny, and after a few moment's pause, replied :—" For old acquaintance' sake ? —there is indeed something in thy face that appears familiar to me, yet I cannot recal where I have beheld thee before."

" Ah, señor, how easy is it to forget an old friend,—did I not pour into thy lap a full bag of gold and silver coins, and permit thee to help thyself thereto, in consideration of my possessing a certain grey destrier ?"—and the Gitano burst into one of his ringing laughs.

" St. Jago ! thou art right,—aye, I recall thee now,—thou merry knave ! Ill did thy mirth suit with me then, but times are changed—yes, times are changed, my friend ; I can laugh with thee now, although my good old lord hath passed away."

The cunning Gitano might have extracted abundant matter from the simplicity of Perez, to furnish amusement for himself and comrades for many a day ; but an unwonted weight was on his

mind, and spite of every effort at his usual wild gaiety, the deadly mission on which his false testimony had sent a king, whose nod he knew full well could decide on life or death, perpetually haunted his mind. Little dreaming that Perez was a member of that household on which he had brought such powerful ire, he by degrees led the conversation to the subject uppermost on his mind, and notwithstanding his natural caution, ventured to hint that ere long some dreadful storm would burst over the royal quinta at Beira. But when Perez, by his eager questions, betrayed the interest he felt in its inmates, the cunning knave ceased to be communicative, and at length refused to answer his inquiries.

The fears of Perez were, however, roused,— he was not to be so baffled ; and suddenly seizing his comrade by the throat, he swore that he would slay him on the spot if he revealed not all he knew or suspected. Gheran instinctively sought the hilt of his crooked blade, but it had

been left with his Rommany dress in the palace of his noble tutor; and after striving in vain to shake off the stern grasp of the powerful Spaniard, he promised him, if he would not harm him, to tell him all he knew. Perez assured him he should depart scathless the instant he had divulged his secret; but Gheran, even in yielding to his vehemence, forgot not his wonted cunning. He said that whilst idling near the palace, he had beheld the king issue forth, attended by a few followers,—that his face was flushed with rage,—and that he heard him give the order to hasten to Coimbra. He also hinted that whispers were floating in the city, from which he had learned that the ire of Alphonso against his son had amounted to an almost frantic height, and all anticipated some dreadful explosion thereof would be the consequence of this sudden visit to the quinta of the Infanta.

All the promises and threats of Perez could obtain no more,—and on being released from his iron grasp, the stout macho of the swart

wanderer soon bore him beyond the influence of the Spaniard.

For a moment Perez sat irresolute on the spot where the Gitano had left him,—thoughts quick as light rushing through his bewildered brain. The orders he had borne to Lisbon for the nomination of his countryman, Don Emanuel Viegua, to the vacant post, which it was well known was granted to the fugitive Castilian through the influence of the Infanta, seemed to furnish a cause for Alphonso's sudden rage. But the fears he felt for his lady were counterbalanced by the consciousness that all Don Pedro's power and influence would be exerted for her protection. This thought recalled him to the quinta, and he rejoiced to remember that the English knight and his followers had been added to its number of stout retainers on the previous day. But the next moment a chill of horror struck on his heart,—for he recollected the appointed chase, and knew too well that every spear that could obtain the envied privi-

lege, would attend at the royal sport. What might be the fate of Donna Inez, if found almost unprotected by the king in the first transport of his ungovernable rage, he feared to conjecture; and under the influence of the feelings of the moment, he suddenly urged his horse to his swiftest pace, as if hoping his single arm might avail to avert the threatened evil. But few bounds, however, had his destrier made before he was again checked. Perez remembered that De Lacy had intended to part company with the prince at noon, or earlier if possible, in order to visit the quinta of the well-known Moor, Yusef Abu Amir. He suddenly wheeled his steed, and, since to find Don Pedro on the hunting-ground were a hopeless endeavour, determined on securing the redoubtable strength and energies of the English knight in defence of the royal lady.

CHAPTER VII.

“ On this moment

Does the world hang.—For God's sake !—to the Duke—
Whilst we are speaking——”

Schiller.

On pressed the furious king and his adherents as rapidly as if urged by demons ; and although their interest in Alphonso's health made them insist on his pausing during the intensest heats of noon, yet they took care to so contrive his hours of rest that no counter influence should intrude to neutralise theirs.

They led him to a cavern in the serra, and occupied the hour in recapitulating and placing in new and yet more startling lights, the dark suspicions he entertained respecting the hapless Inez. As soon as the slightest variation could

be perceived in the direction of the shadows cast by the stunted trees, they mounted the horses led by the guards, and once more changed them ere reaching the termination of their fatiguing journey.

Near the quinta of Don Pedro arose a small eminence crowned with the graceful cypresses of Portugal, at the foot of which, beside a rustic bower, a beautiful fountain played unceasingly.

This was the favourite resort of Inez at the evening hour, and thither had she now repaired with her children and attendants, awaiting with impatient love the return of her lord. The little Beatrice was seated on her knee, and her two noble boys had brought a store of flowers,—and standing on each side of their beauteous mother, were placing them with childish glee amidst her raven tresses. The sound of their merry laughter rung through the surrounding groves, and sweetest smiles illumined the fair face of the Infanta, as she joyed in their innocent delight.

The voices of her children prevented Inez noticing a sound, which caught the ear of Sanchiza, who, with two female attendants, stood behind her lady,—and she whispered to her companions,—“The Infant is come. I hear the ring of his armour,—but do not disappoint him of the surprise he intends our mistress.”

The next moment, however, a faint shriek burst from her lips, and Inez, startled by the sound, gently drew aside her sons, and looking up, beheld before her the stern and angry visage of the king.

A mortal fear took possession of her heart, and a deathlike paleness overspread her features; but rising from her turfy seat, she placed Beatrice in the arms of her nurse, and approaching Alphonso, sunk at his feet. He looked in vain for the haughty port, the flaunting robes, the regal jewels he had expected to find there,—but beheld instead a meek and gentle mother, whose only ornament was her own unsurpassed loveliness, and the fair flowers with which her children had adorned her.

The king paused, hesitated, relented of his stern purpose,—and Inez rising, brought her sons and bade them kneel before the august stranger. The younger instantly obeyed her, but the elder, fearlessly regarding his unknown grandsire, replied: “He is not a priest,—and to no other may I kneel, save mine own father.”

“I could soon compel thy obedience,” exclaimed Alphonso, half drawing his glittering blade.

The boy gazed on it with unblenching eyes, coolly observing,—“Oh! I often behold a sword; my father always wears one.”

“But art thou not afraid of it?” asked the king, whose native love of a fearless spirit drew his heart unconsciously towards the gallant boy.

“No,” replied the child, “I may not fear anything but sin.”

“How so?”

“Because when I am a man, I shall be a knight like my father, and fight the king's enemies.”

“ Ha ! so young, so ready for strife !—And pray what king will rejoice in the aid of thy powerful arm ?”

“ King Alphonso, to be sure, mine own grand-sire. But when he dies I shall fight for my father, and when my brother is king I shall fight for him !”

“ Brother !”—thy brother !—whom dost thou mean ?”

“ Don't you know that Ferdinand, the prince, is mine own brother ? He lives at court, but we often wish he were here to share our merry sports. Yes, when he is king I shall aid him against all his foes.”

Alphonso turning abruptly, left the spot, and Inez hastily addressing her attendants,—“ Fly with the children,” she exclaimed,—“ Fly, fly !—Pause not a moment till ye have reached the convent of the Benedictines ; nor then till ye have placed them beside the altar. *There* they may be safe,—there only ! The king is not alone, and that some dreadful thought is in his heart I

feel too sure. But fly!—place my children in safety, and I fear him not.”

“And thyself, señora?” urged Sanchiza.

“Fear not for me, I will remain, and prevent, if it may be, their pursuit of my little ones: believe me, ’tis the children of Don Pedro whom they seek. Now use thy utmost speed, and send hither Father Anselm, or some of the good monks,—their presence may perhaps avail me. Haste, haste!” Thus spoke the trembling mother, urging the while her terrified women towards the path that led by a short but steep ascent to the convent. Then returning to the fountain, she murmured: “Ah, Pedro!—my beloved! my guardian!—I know not whether to wish thee here, or rejoice that thou art away,—for who would arm a son against his sire?”

Meanwhile the king had returned to the spot, a few paces off, where his courtiers awaited him; and d’Ercilia, with a savage gesture pointing to his sword as he approached them, exclaimed,—“Is it yet dry?”

"What wouldst thou?" replied Alphonso;
"unless my rage had held, I were incapable of
harming a woman; and that was quenched by
her submissive looks, and the bold answers of her
child. I cannot harm them!"

"Then why didst thou choose the office?—were
we not willing to rid thee, O king, of the task?
E'en now give us but the word, and we do thy
bidding. Ours are not hearts to be wiled from
their purpose by the artful blandishments that
have enslaved Don Pedro! But perhaps," he
continued, observing that the king wavered,—
"perhaps my liege is so far relenting, that he
would willingly receive this imperious Spaniard
as his daughter, give up the noble alliances pro-
posed for the Infant, and suffer the pert son
of so crafty a mother to wade to his throne
through the blood of the hapless Ferdinand!"

"Hold, hold!" exclaimed the king, whom
those cunning words lashed into fresh fury,—
"If ye boast fiercer hearts than mine, prove it now!
But what ye do, do quickly!"

Requiring no second bidding, they rushed all three towards their helpless prey. And, oh disgrace to manhood!—those armed and accoutred knights shamed not with bared weapons to enter the presence of a defenceless lady! All pale and trembling, Inez had just tottered to the seat beside the fountain as they approached it; and a dimness clouded her eyes, and a cold dew burst over her throbbing temples, as in one of those fierce warriors she descried her old and sworn enemy. “Now haste thee, Pedro,” she faintly murmured, “or I am lost!”

“Lost indeed thou art to him for ever!” cried that abhorred voice, whose harsh tones she had not heard for years;—“thou hast already too long triumphed over me!”

“Ah! believe me, sir knight,”—she strove to say,—“I never sought thy discomfiture;—was it a crime that I strove to secure mine own happiness?”

“We are here, not for parley, but for vengeance!” he sternly said.

"Surely," she exclaimed, attempting to rise, but her trembling limbs refusing to sustain her, she again sunk on the seat wheron the monarch found her ;—"surely, señors, for the honour of knighthood, ye would not harm a helpless lady?"

Pacheco left the spot, and Caelho perceived that Gonçalez' brow grew less stern.

At that moment the merry sound of a bugle echoed among the hills.—"He comes!" cried Inez; and sudden strength returning to her with that blithe sound, she started to her feet, exclaiming,— "Now beware what ye do,—for my lord, the prince, is here!"

Caelho regarded her countenance, which had instantaneously exchanged its mortal paleness for the light of renewed hope, and confidence, and affection ;—with the fierce glare of a fiend, raising his flashing blade on high, he growled in hoarse and savage tones,— "He comes too late!"

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CHAPTER VIII.

“ De norte em dous sonhos que mentiam,
De dia pensamentos que voavam ;
E quanto en fim cudava, e quanto via,
Eram tudo memorias de alegria.”

Camoens.

“ O Imogen !
My queen ! my life ! my wife ! Oh Imogen !
Imogen ! Imogen !”

Cymbeline.

AFTER parting with De Lacy, Don Pedro and his attendants resumed their sports. Careless of the fleeting hours, and all unconscious of the mighty destinies that loaded their rushing wings, the prince pursued with jocund heart the flying prey. The dark woods and rugged serras echoed to the thrilling blasts of his mellow horn, and the wild deer in their distant coverts started and trembled at the sound.

At length the declining day drew his thoughts to his earthly Paradise ; and fancy pictured his gentle consort, seated in her favourite evening bower, beside the gurgling fountain, which with its ceaseless murmur had so often responded to their whispered converse. Yes ! fond thoughts of love and home came with the soft evening hour ; and the steps of Pedro's wearied steed were directed towards the spot whither the husband's heart now turned with irrepressible yearnings. The animal, as if sympathising with the wishes of his royal master,—though in fact only obeying one of its most marked instincts,—appeared to forget his fatigue ; and renewed vigour seemed imparted to his graceful limbs by the signal to return.

The shadows of eve were hovering over that beloved valley, as the prince arrived at a portion of the road, which, bending round the face of the mountain, overlooked his tranquil home. There paused he, and raising to his lips his jewelled bugle, blew that well-known reveille,

whereby he was wont to announce his coming to his beloved. But scarcely had its echo died away among the distant hills, when the calm of the quiet evening was rent asunder by a piercing cry, which arose from the very heart of the valley,—so shrill, so wild, so agonizing, that the terrified birds darted from the tangled branches of the pines that clothed the side of the mountain, and screaming with alarm, whirled round and round on agitated and rapid wings,

“Ministers of grace and mercy!” exclaimed Don Pedro, “what means that cry of horror?” And ere his attendants could guess at, much less prevent the impulsive act, he had sprang from his horse, thrown himself amidst the pines that grew beneath him, and by the aid of their gnarled branches dropped down the steep precipice. Almost paralyzed by surprise and terror, and despairing of imitating a feat, which desperation alone could have urged, and super-human energy effected; the attendants of the Infant galloped with headlong speed along the

mountain road, which by a circuitous route led to the quinta.

Scarcely a moment had elapsed since he left his steed, when Don Pedro reached his own fairy bowers ;—and either led by some powerful impulse, or directed by the fearful sound he had heard, he rushed through shrub and parterre, not pausing to follow the devious paths, but bursting through every leafy obstacle that interrupted his route towards that fateful fountain which calmly played beneath the hill of cypresses.

As he approached the spot, Father Anselm hurried from an opposite path ; but—oh ! ye hovering angels of pity and of love ! what ruthless sight made for a brief instant the steps of each recoil with horror and despair ! The fountain's ceaseless waves still calmly murmured on, as if mocking the whirlwind of human passions that now raged there. But oh ! to what blighted flower ! to what ruined joy ! may be compared that fair, scathed form ; that, stretched motionless beside it, paid to its pellucid waves a dark

tribute of most innocent blood, which gushing from the fair bosom of the Infanta of Portugal, dyed for ever the snowy pebbles* over which its waters ran. The maddened husband soonest recovered from the fearful shock ; and uttering a cry of anguish, rushed to rescue from the earth's cold breast that beloved and drooping head ; whilst the monk hastened to his side, and strove with trembling hands to close the gaping wound.

As he in part succeeded, a gasping sigh burst from the sufferer, and the purple lids rising from her languid eyes, she cast a fearful gaze around, as if in search of some terrific object ; then suddenly stretching forth her arms, faintly murmured in tones of thrilling anguish : “ My Pedro ! my children ! ”

“ Blessed be God ! she yet lives,” whispered the prince ; and pressing his lips on her cold damp brow, he breathed forth

* The stones found in the Font des Amor have the appearance of being covered with blood.

words of frantic tenderness ; whilst Inez recognising her lord, turned on him her fading eyes, in which the radiance of hope struggled with the gathering shades of the destroyer.

Father Anselm, who had been anxiously examining the wound, and with breathless earnestness watching the countenance of the royal lady, now whispered to the startled and eager ear of the prince: " Send instantly to the convent,—we may not lose a moment !" Pedro uttered not a word of reply, but as he fixed his earnest gaze on the countenance of the monk, a rigid sternness passed over every line and muscle of his face, whilst the blood retreating from cheek, lip, and brow, left scarce more gleam of vitality in his look of despair than might be found in the sculptured marble.

Whilst Father Anselm yet shuddered beneath that stony gaze, the prince laid the drooping head of his dying wife on the monk's shoulder, and darted from the spot. Tears flowed down the old man's cheek, as he marked the wistful gaze with which Donna Inez followed the de-

parting steps of her lord.—“ Daughter !” he softly said,—“ the love of husband and children, though holy, are but earthly affections; thou hast learnt that Divine love must reign paramount in the Christian’s heart ! Oh, if ’twere His will so to try thy fidelity, couldst thou cheerfully quit those dear ones at his bidding ? ”

“ Alas ! ” she with difficulty replied, and in regretful tones,—“ I believed myself safe, as the beloved of Pedro, rather than as the child of God !—I have trusted in the arm of flesh, and it hath failed me ! ”

The gentle voice of the good father breathed into her ear words of comfort all unearthly, and reminded her of bright and eternal hopes. He strove, and not in vain, to relieve of its intensest agony, the soul which too fondly clung to earthly ties, and quailed at the dread prospect of standing in a few short moments before its all-perfect Judge ! He listened to her acknowledged faults, and bestowing the church’s absolution, gradually attuned her mind to thoughts of penitence and peace. He placed before her, too, the small image

of her dying Saviour, which he ever wore upon his bosom ; and thus recalling to her mind, at one glance, all the mercy and ineffable love, and superabounding merits of the world's Redeemer, bade her unite her sufferings of body, her anguish of mind, with His all-atoning sacrifice.

When Don Pedro returned, accompanied by the religious, who were prepared to administer the last consolations of the dying ; they found her ready to receive them. Her mind was collected and calm, for the first bitter pang which accompanied the announcement that the world was well-nigh closed to her, and its sweet ties for ever, was past ! Admonished by their experience of humanity's worst ills, the monks did not pause for the removal of Donna Inez to the quinta, but kneeling around the dying princess, softly murmured the prayers for the agonising, whilst Father Anselm administered to her the last rites of the church.

“ May I once more behold my children ? ” she faintly asked, when those holy offices were concluded.

"They accompanied us hither," replied one of the monks, "and await close at hand."

"Suffer not their young eyes to be shocked by the sight of blood!" she murmured, as the monk hastened to convey to her side her infant offspring. Obeying the entreaty of the tender mother, they covered with their cloaks, the dark stains that had flowed from her most innocent heart; and the royal children approached with steps tamed and spirits subdued by awe, though their tender years scarce permitted them to comprehend the scene they beheld. They were placed on their knees beside their mother, and resting on their young heads her trembling hands, she raised her eyes to heaven, and in accents scarcely audible murmured:—"Bless them! O Heavenly Father, bless these little ones, to whom a mother's watchful love and guiding tenderness, will soon be known no more! —Not this world's success or happiness do I ask for these,—ah no! all appears to me now as it really is, vain and perishing! To serve Thee

perfectly,—to love Thy laws,—to save their immortal souls,—to gain heaven,—these are the priceless favours I ask of Thee, who art never deaf to a dying parent's prayer!" She paused, and gazed with a mournful tenderness which dimmed with tears the eyes that watched around, on the unconscious face of her youngest darling; then gave expression to her thoughts in a touching exclamation:—"Alas, my Beatrice!—thou, too, like me, wilt never know the bliss of a mother's smile!"

She ceased to speak, and her laboured breath grew more slight and tremulous. The weeping children were removed, and the head of the dying wife sunk on her husband's bosom, who watched her changing countenance with such a gaze as might be given by the wrecked mariner to the departing sun as it set on a night of horror.

Amidst her hair still clung the bright-hued flowers which her children had placed there, thus unconsciously decking her for the cruel sacrifice. Ill-starred blossoms! which opening

in most evil hour, were snatched from the evening dews, but to be bathed in the damps of death!

As the dying eyes of Inez sought the hueless countenance that bent above them, and read therein an anguish far beyond the mortal struggle beneath which the powers of her blighted life were sinking fast; a gentle pressure of her hand replied to his, and she feebly murmured,—
“Mourn not, my beloved! death can only rob us of such of our love as was capable of sorrow! —Oh, remember the time hath been when I had gladly welcomed such a fate as this!”
The faint voice ceased, but still her white lips moved, as if striving to utter some last word of consolation or of love!—and then her eyes turned towards the deep blue sky,—and a sudden brightness illumed her sunken features,—a halo of calmest rapture, which robbed death of so much of his stern dismay as almost to awaken hope in the bosom of the sad watchers. It lingered,—flashed for a moment,—then slowly

waned away,—like the last rosy gleam departing from the sunset clouds ;—and nought was left of that beloved and gentle being, but the perishing clay !

One silent, incredulous moment, followed ;—and then came the stern and trembling fear—the wild gaze—the frantic question—the vainly sought throb of pulse or heart—and the dreadful burst of long-restrained anguish and withering despair !

Veil, veil the aspect of that most poignant woe ! oh, essay not to whisper its frantic words. —The strong warrior's heart was crushed, and bowed to the very earth were the powerful energies that could have calmly smiled at fate's bitterest doom, had it but spared him this !

They hurried him from the spot,—for he heard not their words of everlasting hope ;—and forbearing to wrestle with such mighty woe, they led him to the convent chapel, and placed him beneath the rood ; hoping the sight of that agony might speak to the wounded spirit, to which words, however holy, could offer no consolation.

The solemn and wonted influence of the

sacred place fell on the mourner's heart like holiest balm ;—on the spot where they led him he sunk in silence down. Prostrate before the altar they left him to his sorrow, whilst silently assuming their snowy robes, the monks assembled in the choir, and commenced the solemn office for the dead. The soft gloom of evening fell on the venerable aisles, as the first wailing chant of the solemn requiem ascended to heaven, burthened with the low gasping sobs that burst from the prostrate mourner ; who, paralysed by despair, and stunned by the first intensity of his irremediable woe, lay like a crushed worm on the marble floor.

As the graceful ruins of the murdered princess were borne by her wailing attendants to the bower that she had quitted, all loveliness and health and happiness, but one short hour before ; the huntsmen who had accompanied the Infant, reached the quinta, and soon learned from the horror-stricken domestics the fearful tragedy which gave the spot throughout succeeding ages, so mournful a fame. Never was lady more truly

beloved by those who ministered around her, than the noble Inez ; and the horror and anguish that the recital of her murder awoke in their bosoms, was succeeded by a passionate yearning to avenge it.

Yet, of all who mourned or threatened, not one was found who could point towards the hand that had struck the cruel and disgraceful blow ; Sanchiza, indeed, had recognised the king, but from the moment of hearing at the convent the dreadful tidings, she had recovered from one death-like swoon only to relapse into another.

Whilst within the palace, tears flowed and groans resounded, and without it reigned muttered threats, and passionate regrets, and a confused tumult of over-wrought but subdued feelings ; the rapid clatter of horse's hoofs were suddenly heard rushing with headlong speed over the rocky ground. All turned their eyes towards the gates, which none had cared to close ; and the agitated crowd was suddenly augmented by the addition of a single horseman, who rushed

at full speed into the court-yard, and had but just time to leap from his steed ere the animal sunk lifeless on the ground.

"'Tis the brave Englishman, the gallant De Lacy!" exclaimed several voices; and in hopes of gaining information, or receiving counsel from him, they crowded around the breathless knight.

"Now Heaven in its mercy forbid that I come too late!" he cried, gazing with apprehensive eyes on the stern, and haggard, and tearful countenances which surrounded him. An ominous silence followed, and tears gushed forth afresh,—and stern brows grew more dark,—and some turned away, as dreading to disgrace their country by revealing to a stranger the foul crime that had darkly dyed her annals for ever!

"There is no voice here!"—exclaimed De Lacy with accents agitated and breathless,—“but every face is eloquent with dreadful meaning.—Oh, if ye would not freeze my blood with horror, speak!—where is Don Pedro?"

"The brothers have taken him to the monastery," said a trembling voice.

"And the princess,—Donna Inez,—where is she?"

A wail of anguish, whose fearful meaning could not be mistaken, was the only answer he received.—De Lacy drew his hunting-cap over his stern brows; he saw too plainly the blow had indeed fallen—and *where*; and across his rigid features the convulsive quiver of man's mute anguish passed, leaving it stern and haggard as those that surrounded him.

And now, one, mastering his anguish, imparted in broken sentences the fearful truth, ending the sad tale with the circumstance that left their indignation to eat into their chafed hearts,—the assassin had escaped unknown.

"Not so!" shouted De Lacy, with a voice of thunder; "Not so!—but few miles from hence I met the armed ruffians, who to the eternal disgrace of knighthood scorned not to war on woman's sacred form! Oh, had I but known the

cause of that demoniac joy, that likened the fierce countenance of Caelho to the triumphant visage of an exulting fiend, not Alphonso's self should have borne him from my swift vengeance ! But mark me, Portuguese—your prince may be so stunned by the cruel blow that hath ruined his peace, as to have not yet thought of avenging it ;—but be assured 'twill not be for long. And if the counsel of a stranger may be welcome—ye shall make such good use of the time that must be given Don Pedro to regain his blasted energies, that when he arises from his torpor of agony, he shall find the nation's sympathies rallying around him, and every manly heart in Portugal panting to wipe off from his outraged country the foul disgrace which hath been this day inflicted on her !”

And with the energetic and soul-stirring eloquence with which a powerful nature sways at its will the minds of others, the Englishman, in a few brief, powerful words, arranged a plan, whereby the news of the murder was swiftly

carried into every corner of the land. In a few hours, not a breath swept over Portugal but was laden with execrations against the frantic monarch; who had sanctioned, if not aided, in perpetrating so fearful a crime.

It was midnight,—the remains of the Infanta had been laid in mournful state within her hushed bower. Dark draperies had been hung, and tall waxen tapers placed around; whilst on each side of the mournful couch a venerable religious sat, who with alternate voices chanted the office of the dead.

The door of the chamber of death was guarded by two attendants of the deceased. A mournful watch was there, silent and tearful!

It was midnight,—when, stealing on the breathless silence that reigned around, the low sound of footsteps startled the watchers; and with surprise they beheld approaching, led by a page, a figure so wan and wild, that they could almost have believed him a visitant from the grave. On his

arm nestled a small dog, which they would have recognised as a favourite of their late mistress, but that it had died some months before.

As the scared attendants gazed on the stranger, the page whispered, in those subdued tones which for some mysterious cause are alone heard in the vicinity of the dead: "He says he must see our lady."

"Who is he?—no one can enter this chamber without an order from the Infant, or Father Anselm."

"Lead me, then, to one of these," murmured the hollow voice of the stranger.

"Alas! who shall find the prince, whom no one has for hours beheld? and Father Anselm watches within. When his place is supplied by another, thou canst prefer thy request to him."

"I am not to be denied," replied the stranger;—"could the prince see me, he would instantly grant my prayer."

"What wouldst thou," said a voice from the gloom behind the speaker,—and in another

moment the group was joined by him of whom they spoke,—even by Don Pedro;—but oh ! so wan ! so changed ! so defrauded of every youthful grace ! that all gazed on him for a few silent moments, unable to address him. “What wouldst thou ask of the prince ?” he repeated.

“Knowest thou not, my lord, the alchymist, Henriquez de la Zibrieria ?”

“Art thou he ?”

“Yestereen thou knewest me well, señor,” replied the youth, with a look of surprise.

“True—true !—but we are all changed since then ; methinks the faces I beheld this very morn are grown haggard, wild, and strange !—Well ! what wouldst thou ?”

To those who had heard the joyous accents of the prince on that happy morn, no change seemed greater than that in *its* tones, which now fell on their ears so melancholy,—so hopelessly sad, as to impart to their hearts a pang more exquisite than the wildest burst of grief could have inflicted.

"Dost thou remark this, my gracious liege?" asked the student, extending towards him the little dog; which, however, appeared to sleep, being perfectly motionless.

"Ha! I should believe it our prized *Para*, but that he died some months ago."

"Nevertheless, 'tis he, señor; I begged him of the page who was ordered to bury him, and infused into his veins a subtle fluid which has preserved him from decay.—And now listen to the mission which hath, on this mournful night, brought me hither. It is to implore thee not to suffer corruption to approach that peerless form, which, but for man's blind fury, had not gone down in all its loveliness to the grave;—to pray thee that I may exert mine art to render that best-loved clay imperishable, —even as, for her sake, I have made the thing she loved."

A sudden gleam of light illumined the sunken eyes of Pedro: he seized the arm of the alchemist, and with a voice tremulous with

eagerness, exclaimed : " Art thou now prepared to do it ?"

" I am."

" Then follow me !" and opening the door of the chamber of death, they disappeared from the gaze of the wondering attendants.

They entered the spot where she lay in death whom both had loved so long and well. Most painful was the task which the one undertook to witness, the other to perform,—for the cruel wound that had freed her pure soul had to be carefully sealed, the fair round arm to be bared, and the bloodless vein opened. By means of a simple apparatus, an invisible fluid was injected therein, which, spreading throughout the whole nervous and arterial system, penetrated to every portion of the frame.

Some powerful motive sustained Pedro during the operation. Kneeling the while beside that loved clay, he calmly watched the hushed countenance till he almost fancied it essayed to smile ; so sweet and tranquil appeared its calm

repose. The sad duty done, Henriquez took a lingering but mute farewell of his blighted idol, and returned with slow and faltering steps to Coimbra; whilst Pedro, seating himself beside the body, left it not again till the grave closed over it !

CHAPTER IX.

“The crimson pomp
And glare of palace chambers round him lie,
But on his cheek the royal spirit stamps
A weariness, that mocks this outward show
Of kings; a prison would have graced it more !”

Montgomery.

A FEW weeks have passed away, and Alphonso sits, moody and silent, in that stately chamber in which his own violent and unrestrained passions had rendered him the dupe of the crafty and cruel spirits who had now fled,—leaving him to endure alone the detestation and obloquy earned by the dark deed to which they had successfully tempted him.

The stern visage of the king was not without traces that the ever-gnawing canker-worm, wherewith conscience torments the criminal

whom human justice fails to reach, was busy at his heart. His features were sharpened, his form somewhat bent, and much attenuated; his glance quick and ever wandering, his cheek pale and sunken.—His fevered hand grasped a parchment, which appeared to have been caught up from numbers that were scattered before him; for some time he strove to fix his attention on the characters traced thereon, but suddenly flinging it on the table, he started from his seat, and gnawing his nether lip, in the effort to suppress his emotion, with a disordered air and enfeebled steps, paced the spacious room. The war of contending passions had, however, done more than time towards breaking down the remaining strength of his once powerful frame, and he was soon fain to throw himself on his uneasy resting-place.

Meanwhile stood before his chair, pale and sorrowful, an aged hidalgo, whom the king, when he had reseated himself, addressed in passionate tones:—"And what madness induced

thee, Don José d'Almeida, and the two audacious nobles thou hast named, to give safe-conduct to this proud stranger, whom our rebel son distinguishes with so important a place in his treasonous councils?"

"The hope of saving this distracted realm, my liege, from all the horrors of a civil war!—Had he not some peaceful overture to make, he would scarcely ask an audience."

"Nay,—an' he come to request forgiveness for this rash outbreak, we may perhaps listen; but should he dare to dictate in the terms of an equal,—by the spirits of my ancestors! he will find the old eagle hath his beak and talons yet."

"Your grace forgets," replied Almeida, with a stately though reverent air,—“that, from outrage, the envoy is secured by the safe-conduct ensured to him by myself and peers."

"Suppose, then, he presume to make some braggart overture, to which we may refuse to listen?"

“ In such case, O king, I see no alternative but war. Yet, ere deciding on such a course, I would implore thee to reflect that the voice of the whole country is with Don Pedro,—that the flower of the army have either openly joined him with their brave and knightly commanders, or cling to thee only because attached to the few faithful leaders who will not quit their suzerain. Already have I said, my liege, that the whole of the youthful hidalgos have flocked to the standard of the Infant,—and, to support thy cause, remain only those aged nobles, and veteran knights, who have too long and well served their king, to desert him now.

“ The English troops, likewise, so suddenly landed in the north,—although for the most part mere yeomen adventurers, collected from the domains of this young knight who so actively espouses the cause of Don Pedro,—are young, hardy, vigorous, and tolerably well disciplined. But what makes them especially dreaded by our army, and relied on by that they have joined, is

the fact, that they have, with incredible labour, dragged over mountain, and valley, and roaring stream, two of those wondrous death-dealing engines, so fatally powerful at the famed battle of Cressy; and before which, the strongest fortresses crumble to dust.

“Consider then, my sovereign, the fearful responsibility thou must incur by refusing an opportunity, which perhaps this desired interview may afford, of averting the fearful storm that threatens to overwhelm our country.” The king made no reply, and after some moments’ silence, Don José said,—“Have I thy sanction, señor rey, to command the approach of the envoy?”

“As thou wilt,” replied Alphonso; “it little skills our opposing thee, since open rebellion and secret dissatisfaction surround us on all sides.”

Not heeding the injustice couched in the king’s petulant remark, the aged noble departed. Shortly afterwards the members of his council seated themselves at the board; and Alphonso, exerting what slight influence his mind yet re-

tained over passions which had been so long indulged as to be nearly ungovernable; endeavoured to calm his ruffled brow, and assume some appearance of composure.

As his restless eye, however, wandered round the circle of silent councillors who had assembled to aid him, he noted many a vacant place, the occupant of which he rightly judged to be arrayed against him. And in those who remained he failed not to remark, alienated and saddened looks, which corroborated the words of d'Almeida; and furnished him with another proof, (if any were needed,) that the whole kingdom recoiled with horror, from the perpetrator of a deed, that outraged the best feelings of humanity. Such thoughts, however, he permitted not to linger on his mind; but proudly strove, by his scowling brows, to resent the too evident displeasure of the few nobles, who conceived that their duty permitted them not to desert, in his extreme peril, the sovereign they despised.

And now entered, conducted by three of Portugal's noblest warriors, the gallant English knight ; who, alone, when all else shrunk from the office, volunteered, for this dangerous service ; having no security against the violence of Alphonso, but the word of three hidalgos ; who, themselves half-fearful of the event of the interview, stood closely beside him. The envoy was enveloped from head to foot in splendid armour of burnished steel, inlaid in every part with delicately traced and intricate scroll-work of gold. His glittering helm was surmounted by a plume of snowy feathers, and a surcoat of white satin, so laden with gold embroidery as almost to conceal the material, covered his hauberk ; and was crossed by a baldrick of crimson velvet, enriched with gems. The sheath that depended therefrom, however, contained no blade ; for in accordance with the well-known custom of the jealous monarch, (who never suffered the emissary of an adverse host to enter his presence armed offensively,) it had been withdrawn ere De Lacy left the antechamber.

The only portion of the knight's person that was uncased with steel, was so much of his face as the raised vizor revealed ; and the nobles (all of whom had known him on his previous visit to Portugal), could scarcely recognise the gay and joyous De Lacy in that stern and powerful warrior, whose look of calm and concentrated resolve, denoted the steady firmness of purpose, and unconquerable energy, which forms the groundwork of every great character.

The eye of the guilty monarch fell beneath his glance ; and striving by an assumed rage to disguise the shame ever admonishing his heart, that he was an object of abhorrence to every noble nature, he angrily exclaimed :—" Since Don Pedro presumes to arm his father's subjects against their sovereign, wherefore did he not, as a declared enemy, send hither a herald to convey his insolent message ?"

" Because, O king, war, as yet, exists not, between him and thee."

" Why, then, the gathering of hosts in Tras-

os-Montes and Beira!—Why this arming of foreign mercenaries against our loyal people?"

"In order that if justice be again refused to the entreaty of Don Pedro, it may be extorted with an arm of iron."

"Of what justice dost thou speak?"

"The delivery, to the most cruelly wronged prince, of those base and cowardly murderers; who, with vulture swoop, surprised his peaceful home, and slew his most innocent and defenceless wife!"

"A stranger to Portugal," replied Alphonso, his countenance the while growing pale, and a sudden quiver agitating his lips, "might be imposed upon by the invention of an artful woman; but they who know the barrier that existed between them, have not to be informed that she of whom thou speakest was but the shameless leman of the infatuated prince."

"Whoever dares maintain so foul a slander," exclaimed De Lacy in his most powerful tones, while the angry spot spread over his brow, and

his eyes flashed with indignation,—“lies in his throat,—and I impeach him as a false traitor and dishonoured knight!”

Alphonso started, sunk back in his chair, and gazed on the countenance of the knight with distended eyes. The moment's pause which followed, enabled De Lacy to master his passion; and the nobles looked from each other to the bold speaker; one moment about to resent his angry violence, the next impatient of what should follow.

The knight resumed in calmer tones:—“If Don Pedro, in deference to his sire, hath suffered a shade of doubt to obscure the fame of his most chaste and innocent princess,—*I* have no such motive; and I here warn thee, O king, that the honour of thy royal consort is not more spotless, than shall that of Inez de Castro appear ere long!”

A deadly paleness now gathered over the countenance of Alphonso; but still determined in his obstinate adherence to opinions once

formed, he summoned passion to the aid of his quailing spirit. Starting from his chair, he involuntarily clutched his weapon, and bending his heavy brows over the concentrated gaze which he fixed on the dauntless knight,—“What!” he exclaimed, “are we to be bearded in our own palace?”

The nobles gathered around De Lacy, and d’Almeida whispered,—“To thy mission, sir knight, in heaven’s name!”

“’Tis briefly this, ye nobles,” he replied, nothing daunted by the frantic menace of Alphonso :—“Don Pedro demands that to my hands be delivered the persons of the three recreant assassins,—Pedro Caelho, Alvaro Gonzalez, and Diego Pacheco ;—on which condition, my royal commander consents to disband his army and retire into solitude.”

Whilst De Lacy thus spoke, the king resumed his seat, but his varying colour, and agitated limbs, that quivered, like those of a courser impatient of the curb ; indicated the difficulty

with which he restrained his passions. And when, with a hoarse and broken voice, he replied; the blood flowed from the nether lip, on which his teeth had been convulsively fixed in the effort to check his choler. "Tell my rebel son that I reject his insulting proposition, and am well prepared to defend an act which the world knows received my sanction. I will not give up to his headstrong fury, those who in what they did obeyed my bidding. Tell him," he continued, with a voice and air of stern defiance,—for he remarked the eloquent glance which De Lacy cast around him; and the look of shame and sorrow with which every face at the council-board responded, as the king made that shameful admission;—"Tell him to do his worst; aye, even though it be to wade through my blood to the throne he so impatiently covets.—I shall at least have the consolation of knowing that his insolent minion will not place her haughty foot on my grey hairs! Attempt not another word! Begone! and thank these

nobles that my hand has not on this very spot bestowed a fitting reward on the audacity which has dared to insult a crowned king."

De Lacy would have replied, but the nobles all surrounding him, he was with courteous violence hurried from the presence. Alphonso found himself alone; and suffering his frantic rage to o'ermaster the weakness of his exhausted frame, he paced the apartment with rapid strides. As his passion somewhat subsided, however, the languor consequent on the overtaking of an enfeebled system, compelled him to resume his chair. In an attitude of powerless lassitude long sat he there with his vacant eyes fixed on the rush-strewn floor.

When he at length looked once more around him, he with surprise perceived a venerable figure standing nigh, clad in the humble weeds of St. Francis. The king, wondering how he had found such silent entrance into the guarded chamber, had gazed on him some moments ere he recognised the saintly bishop of Brega. When he did so, however, he hastily

averted his eyes with a petulant gesture which seemed to say,—“Now must I endure *his* reproaches!” But if such were his thoughts, they miscalculated, for the prelate uttered not a word. Again the king regarded him with a sidelong glance, and could not but remark in his meek countenance a look of extreme grief and un-reproachful sadness, such as visits the guilty soul with a more severe reproach than can be conveyed by the most severe indignation.

Again and again did Alphonso scan those mute and sorrowful features, till at length a restless impatience took possession of him,—his hitherto stolen glances were exchanged for an inquiring and unaverted look; he moved uneasily in his chair,—but still the old man stood in silence there, nor raised from the floor his eyes.

“Speak, my lord bishop!” at length the king exclaimed; “thou comest, I know, to reproach me,—now that thou art returned from thy distant mission. Well! say on,—thou needst not fear to speak.”

But the aged prelate continued silent. There was another painful pause,—during which the troubled eyes of the monarch were rivetted on the features of his esmolor môr*.

“In heaven’s name! I conjure thee, say what thou wilt!” again exclaimed Alphonso; “any words were better than this chilling silence.”

“’Tis because my silence hath a sufficient voice, O king, to reach thy heart,” replied the bishop, solemnly,—“that I forbore to address thee; for the meek presence of a minister of Him who is all beneficence and love, must reproach the sinner who has outraged His favourite attributes.”

“What avails recurring to the past?” said Alphonso, peevishly; “the deed is done;—perhaps, were it yet to be acted, we might be better guided; but ’tis bootless to dream what *might have been*, whilst treason rules what *is*! Thou

* Chief almoner.

art aware that the Infant is armed to deprive us of our crown,—it may be, of our life.”

“ I have just heard that the king refuses his overtures of peace.”

“ What else could be done ? He demands Caelho and his associates ;—were we to confess that they fled the same day that witnessed their deed of vengeance, and have long ere this taken refuge in Castile ? Why should he know, by our own imbecile acknowledgment, that these wretches abandoned their king as soon so he had ministered to their thirst for blood ? Far better see our kingdom torn from us, than expose the treachery of which we have been the dupe.”

“ Who expects to find honour in the counsels of the wicked ? Yet seest thou not, O Alphonso, that to one hideous crime thou wouldst (merely to avoid wounding thy indomitable pride) add accumulated guilt ;—and not content with ruining the peace of one happy household, wouldst carry desolation to the hearths of thousands ? For, oh ! what other consequences can

follow from thy selfish resolve, but the whelming of thy kingdom in strife and desolation !”

“The guilt be on his rebellious head who commences the war.”

“Say, rather, on him, who hath by one ruthless act, stung a most virtuous prince almost to madness ! Shield not thyself, O Alphonso, with the poor subterfuge that thy hand dealt not the accursed blow : hadst thou not authorised the assassins, they had not dared approach the dwelling of the Infant. Thy soul, therefore, shares the guilt in an equal degree with the actual perpetrators. Oh ! be advised in time ; for though, to earthly tribunals thou art not amenable, thy remaining days are but few, and will soon be past,—and thou wilt be but a lone and sinful man, when thou standest before the awful Judge of kings.”

The solemn words of the divine fell like a note of warning on the monarch's guilty soul. But he wrestled with the powerful influence, before which his haughty spirit unresistingly

sunk down ; and with a futile attempt at dogged insensibility, which was foreign to his nature, he abruptly answered : “ Reason as thou mayest, war at least is inevitable ; for were we inclined to treat for peace, the only terms on which we could secure it are not in our power to grant. Therefore, good father, we but waste time which were better spent in preparing to encounter our domestic foe.”

“ I came not here,” replied the bishop, “ as the advocate of peace, without being fortified with the means which may avail to procure it. Have I the permission of my liege lord to suggest the only chance which remains of averting the threatened ruin ?”

“ Thou hast,” replied the king, with a glance of impatient incredulity,—“ but I would stipulate for brevity.”

“ It is then briefly this. The influence of the queen is well known to be all-powerful with Don Pedro ;—let it be now exerted in behalf of her people. He cannot resist her entreaty ; nor will

one so devoted to the good of others refuse to make an effort ennobled by its glorious motive."

"So! this then is thy wise proposal!—that our royal consort should go, like the wife of a vanquished slave, and implore for peace, ere fate hath decided who shall be the victor?"

"But I have to inform the king that it is well-nigh decided without the strife he meditates. Three portions of the troops remaining in Lisbon, and several of the nobles, escorted Sir Alfred De Lacy from the walls, and have not returned; and the citizens, who, in countless crowds, followed him to the gates, expressed by words as well as looks, such sympathy with his royal commander, that it is doubtful but they prevent Don Pedro entering the city with vizor down and lance in rest*, by opening the gates the instant he approaches them."

News so overwhelming and unexpected almost paralysed the unhappy monarch;—but passion

* The manner of entering a conquered city.

still ruling reason, he faintly cried,—“Well, let him come, and terminate at once the life that gave him existence! Better so perish, than stoop to a slave’s submission!”

“Still ruled by pride and selfishness!” replied the prelate, with as severe a tone as was possible to one so mild; “hast thou no thought, my liege, for those few faithful hearts that are ready to perish beside, rather than desert thee? Oh! act for once like a Christian man, and since pride hurried thee into this dread extremity, let humility rescue thee from it.”

“I tell thee, my lord bishop, the queen is incapable of making such an effort as thou proposest:—a journey into *Tras-os-Montes*, indeed!—and on such an errand!—why, each time that I have seen her for some weeks, her ceaseless tears have deprived her of the power to reply to my greeting:—she is spiritless and unnerved.”

“Her grace hath, I know, been long plunged in grief, for that the father of her children deals out to them his harsh will, without a thought for

their happiness, or a single sympathy with their virtuous wishes. Not only for her son hath Donna Beatrice mourned, but also for the excellent princess her gentle daughter, whom thou by a new act of cruelty wouldst compel to undertake duties for which she feels unsuited. I have, however, seen the queen this day,—have suggested this only chance of restoring peace to the nation,—but diffident of her own strength, she shrunk from the painful task, which, knowing the characteristic firmness of Don Pedro, she deemed hopeless. To urge her to the attempt, I suggested that her consent might perhaps win the king's permission for Donna Maria to fulfil her vocation for a religious life ; and the hope of saving her daughter hath aroused her drooping energies. She consents, on the condition I have named, to permit me to lead her in secrecy into *Tras-os-Montes*, and procure for her an interview with her son."

The king maintained for some time a moody silence, and when to the prelate's anxious in-

quiry he at length gave a stern and reluctant assent, it was with a look of deep mortification, and an accent of sudden despondence.

As the bishop was leaving the chamber, Alphonso, whose eyes followed him as he retired, suddenly exclaimed, whilst a sneer played over his haughty lip:—"Ere thou departest, lord bishop, we would fain know what signifies the mean attire for which thou hast exchanged thy purple rochet?"

The aged prelate paused on the threshold, and with a calm, low voice deliberately said,—“The garb of penitence and mourning shall be in future my only wear,—save such as I assume in the divine service,—since the efforts of my ministry have not sufficed to save those for whom I have laboured, from the commission of a crime that cries to Heaven for vengeance!

“Moreover, know, O Alphonso, that I have sent to the Father of Christendom my episcopal ring, praying him to permit me, a poor, weak old man, to retire from the arduous duties for which I

feel incompetent ;—and as a simple monk, in the convent whence I was summoned to fill the episcopal chair, he permits me to spend in peaceful duties, the few days that remain to me.”

The gentle voice ceased,—the noiseless steps of the speaker bore him silently away,—and the monarch was left alone with his conscience.

CHAPTER X.

"For when a word of men
Could not prevail with all their oratory,
Yet hath a woman's kindness over-ruled."
Shakspeare.

THE evening sun gilds the few clouds that linger around the horizon, and bathes in glorious hues the mountain-tops, and fills with mimic lightnings the river's giant waves, and the slender ripples of fount and stream;—but from one wide plain, extending to the westward of those Cantabrian mountains which branch out from the Pyrenees, its rays are flung back in a thousand angry flashes, by burnished armour, and serried spears, and emblazoned banners.

There, numberless rows of snow-white tents extend across the vale; varied here and there by the graceful pennon, and elaborated adornments, denoting the camp of some powerful chief. Near the centre of the field stands one wide marquee totally undecorated; and another of medium size, beside which floats the royal banner of Portugal; whilst before the entrance of each a sentinel slowly paces. The former is the tent of the council, the latter that of Don Pedro.

Nor was all still, save the beating of hearts, in that canvass city;—grooms and pages and armed squires, were riding to and fro, exercising the fiery steeds, or intent on some appointed duty. Here a group of knights held grave and thoughtful converse,—there a few troopers sat in the shade of a humble tent, discoursing with the idle ease of those, who, depending on the will of others, have no motive for anxiety. Occasionally the thrilling blast of the clarion was re-echoed from the eastern hills; and on the calm evening air was borne at intervals the

shrill word of command ; for just without the lines of the encampment, a knight was exercising some newly arrived recruits ; whilst the unceasing sounds, caused by the armourers, who were forming or repairing the steel habits, and weapons of the age, reverberated through all.

One quarter of the camp was occupied by the troops of De Lacy,—men of sunny countenances and iron frames,—and thence alone arose the voice of song, and the ringing laugh ; for their sympathies being less acutely wounded than those of the native warriors, they did not fail to acquire their usual soubriquet of “ Merry Islanders ! There might be seen the cumbrous culverins ; objects of pride to the English troopers, and of curious inspection to the Portuguese ; a crowd of whom had collected around them, eagerly acquiring from an artillery-man, who good-naturedly replied to their endless questions, some idea of their use and power. It was almost inevitable that both should be much exaggerated,

for the clumsy field-pieces of that age, must have been chiefly valuable for the confidence they inspired on the one side, and the dismay they occasioned on the other.

In another portion of the encampment, a group of tents appeared, which by their simple construction, and scant adornments, evidently belonged to those invincible warriors, who as they rode into battle chanted the noble anthem, —“ Non nobis Domine ;”—of latter years only heard when the feast is done, and the demon of intoxication (whose victims, more numerous than those of the sword, perish, soul as well as body,) hovers over the giddy revellers. There all was still, for the hour of vespers was some time past.

At the northern extremity of the extensive plain, a few rocky eminences, gradually increasing in boldness of outline and sterility, formed the commencement of a mountain, chain; and on every spot wherein had accumulated the debris of ages, chesnut and cork-trees had enfixed their

roots, and found sufficient nourishment to enable them to attain considerable size. Under the shelter of their branches, lesser shrubs flourished luxuriantly, and following the inequalities of the ground, formed innumerable dingles, through which one or two vagrant and nameless rills stole with soothing murmur, though in the rainy season went to dash from rock to rock with considerable impetuosity.

To the dim glens formed in this broken woodland, the harsh sounds from the tented ground came faint and broken,—scarcely interrupting the mingled melodies of bird and stream; and, save when a sudden blast of the wild clarion rent the air, quite incapable of interfering with the reveries of such as sought their solitude. Fit haunts were those mountain groves for the hardy peasant boy, and well fitted to train his young and agile limbs; for the overhanging crags, and the ripe fruit of the towering chestnut, were alike temptations to his danger-loving spirit. And trusty listeners were those sighing

trees to the whispered words of earthly love;—meet inspirers—those solemn glens—for the meditative soul that dreams of a better land. But not now,—ah no! not now; the breath of war hath driven far hence the gentle and meek, the youthful and aged; for though as yet unchanged by its influence, none can say how soon the mortal struggle may terminate beneath those weeping trees,—and darker drops than such as the night-dew leaves, weigh down the slender stems of shrub and flower.

Yet, though forsaken by such as are wont to wander there, one silent valley amid the varied grove is not solitary.

There,—seated on a loose boulder, (which hath been ages before brought thither by some powerful agency, since not only the smoothness of its worn sides, but also its non-affinity to the rocks around, prove it a stranger there,)—appears one around whose form the dark and heavy folds of a wide capote so fell, as to leave neither limb nor feature uncovered, whilst his

motionless attitude, aided by the shade of the cork-tree, beneath the wide branches of which he had chosen his resting-place, rendered him scarcely distinguishable from his rocky seat.

Long must he have sat there, with attitude unchanged,—silent and lone; for the birds, heedless of his presence, were gaily sporting above and around him, and many a gentle creature rushed fearlessly past his unstirred robe,—all unconscious that it concealed man—the destroyer.

On a sudden, however, the voices of the birds were hushed, or sounded from more distant boughs, and the timid things rushed breathlessly to far-off coverts,—footsteps were heard in the glen, and one approached the dreamer already there, and all unnoted, placed himself beside him. The meek yet noble features,—the coarse and simple garb,—the staff,—the snow-white hair,—surely we remember him, though bending now with the weight of years, which have rendered yet more white and scanty his venerable locks!

Yes,—it is the same old man, who erewhile, on the hills that shelter Lisbon, startled with his instructive and warning words, a young, but not unreflective spirit.

Not long had he taken his seat ere his presence was observed by his companion, who, instantly rising, drew his hood cautiously around his face, as he for an instant regarded him,—then turned as if about to depart.

“Stay one moment,” cried the old man, catching at his robe,—“one brief moment, my son! I seek but to know whence this wondrous change. Why dost thou ever, when we meet, walk thus moodily away? Thinkest thou thy silence deceives me? Was not thy face heretofore clear and welcome to mine eyes as this unclouded firmament? Ah! why is it thus averted, and ever closely veiled?”

As the old man thus spoke, he with difficulty kept pace with the rapid stride of him he was addressing. And stern and intensely sad were the tones that responded to his inquiries:

"Lest thou mightest perchance read there, what is written but on one brow in all this wide realm. Detain me not, father,—I have already tarried here too long."

"Yet surely, my son, thy haste, however pressing, can scarcely excuse thy refusing so sternly an old man's prayer!"

The rapid step of the youth was checked,—he paused, and said,—“I meant no disrespect to thee,—and if, in truth, I have been of late in no mood to listen to thy words, however kind or wise, I offer thee now amends. Speak, father, what thou wilt ; but in mercy say it briefly.”

“Nay, ’tis of *that* I came to speak.”

“Of what?”

“Of *mercy*.”

“To whom?”

“To thy bleeding country ! Dost thou not behold her weeping at thy feet ?—are not havoc and ruin about to overwhelm and blast her ?—and thine—yes *thine* the hand that is about to unleash those blood-hounds !”

"Say, rather, I seek to seize that dog of hell, who hath so deeply dyed my country with his one crime,—that not his own blood,—nor even the tears of ages shall efface the dismal stain! Hold me not!—my cause is righteous, and my purpose immovable!"

"Yet remember——"

"I remember only that nought remains to me on earth but vengeance—vengeance!"

"And when that is sated, thinkest thou thy mind will recover its love of mercy and of peace?"

"Content thee;—they who hereafter may have cause to curse the wretch who divested their sovereign's heart of pity, shall have at least the satisfaction of knowing that he was the first to experience his inexorable justice!"

The old man would have replied, but the rapid footsteps of the avenger bore him swiftly away; and, leaning on his staff, the pilgrim (if such he were) gazed after him with tearful eyes.

And now, slowly wending its way betwixt the closely ranged tents, a litter was carefully borne, beside which rode on an easy-paced mule, an aged friar. A few words from him procured it unquestioned passage through the guarded precincts; and silently, and without pause, it passed slowly on to the very centre of the plain.

At the entrance of the royal tent it stopped, and after a brief parley with the sentinel, he summoned from the interior a warrior partly armed; who, advancing towards the litter, started with astonishment, when, on drawing back its drapery, he recognised, in spite of the pallor of her faded countenance, the queen of Portugal!

The knight sunk on his knee before her, and reverently carried her hand to his lips, then removing his helm as he arose, he said,—“In what can I pleasure my royal mistress?”

“We came hither to seek our son!” the queen faintly answered.

“Alas,”—replied Don Gaspar de Carvalho,

—for it was that tried friend of Pedro who addressed her ; “ I beseech the queen to forbear the attempt,— so stern, so altered is his mood, that I fear were he asked an audience for his royal mother, he would refuse the boon !”

“ What ! Don Gaspar,” exclaimed the queen, “ a son refuse to see her who gave him life ?”

“ He hath hitherto avoided all whom he but suspected of a design to attempt softening his stern resolves.”

“ Then will we go to him unannounced.—Nay, deny not our entreaty, Carvalhao; thou wert never a lover of bloodshed, nor canst disapprove of an interview which may, even yet, avert carnage and desolation from thy native land !”

The venerable bishop now approached, and as the knight recognised him with bent knee, the prelate, after bestowing his blessing, said—“ Let not a royal and most revered lady plead to belted knight in vain ;—still less suffer the ministry of an angel of mercy to be rejected by a Christian man !” The cause of humanity pre-

wailed. Deeply sighing, but without reply, the knight assisted the queen from her litter; and supporting her faltering steps, entered the tent, followed by the prelate. Drawing aside a silken curtain, he led them past two motionless sentinels, and silently ushered them into a small and separate division, which formed an apartment, evidently of guarded privacy.

The queen cast her anxious eyes around, but found not what she sought. One individual alone was there,—and he, seated beside a small table, was deeply considering various parchments the appearance of bearing charts or dispatches. The royal mother turned to Carvalho, exclaiming with a disappointed air—“ I asked to see my son !”—The knight replied with a look of extreme anguish; he essayed to speak, but the words he would have uttered died upon his lips, and after a brief struggle his stern nature gave way; the warrior turned aside, covered his face, and wept! “ What means this ?” exclaimed the queen, and again regarding the stran-

ger, who now aware of their presence, had raised his eyes from the parchment, she found her glance rivetted on his wan features. He was all unarmed, and his velvet tunic hung loosely around a form erect but spare. His uncovered locks were mingled with grey, his eyes hollow, his cheeks pale and sunken; whilst around his severely compressed lips, and within his melancholy eyes, reigned an intense sadness, which it was scarce possible to behold without tears.

The queen's heart sunk as she beheld his mournful glance, and slowly advancing towards him, with apprehensive looks, she faintly murmured: "I implore that I may behold Don Pedro, the Infant!"

The sad lips moved, and a hollow voice replied,—"All that remains of Pedro, is here!"

"*Thou*, Pedro!—*thou* my beautiful! my pride!" shrieked the queen,—and as if for the first time comprehending the full extent of his woe, she faintly ejaculated: "Alas! my son! my son!" and sunk at his feet.

Pedro sprung from his couch—"It is the queen! it is my mother!" he exclaimed, raising her in his arms;—then turning to Carvalho, said with a look and voice of reproach,—“Ah, Don Gaspar! was this well?”

The knight ventured no reply; and as the queen slowly revived, and fixing her eyes on her son's countenance, read line by line the tale which anguish had traced ineffaceably there; the unchecked tears flowed down her aged cheeks. The prince placed her in the seat he had just occupied, and sinking at her feet, besought her to be comforted; but she laid her hand on those whitening locks which but a few weeks before were black and glossy as the raven's wing; and her tears gushed forth anew.

It was long ere words were at her command; and when at length she had power to speak, her voice was faint and broken. “Ah me, my son! I had much to say to thee,—but an' my tears speak not to thy heart, methinks all I have to utter must be left unsaid.”

“Heaven forbid!” replied the prince, that

thy tears, sweet mother, should ever need interpreters with me. Yet would I fain they ceased to flow ; for I fear the agitation of this hour will work but ill on thy delicate frame."

" Let each moment they subtract from my life, add years to the lives of my people, and I am content."

" What means the queen ?"

" To never leave thy side, nor dry my weary eyes, till thou promise not to wreak on thousands of hearths the cruelty that has desecrated thine own !"

" How ! señora," said the prince, starting to his feet. " Who has dared to accuse me of a design so vile ?"

" And what else dost thou call this gathering of hosts, which brings into the very heart of the country all the horrors of war ?"

" Oh, my mother ! and canst thou compare the equal and glorious struggle of armed warriors with the base, the cold-blooded cruelty, which could seek my Inez in the midst of her little

ones, and pierce that gentlest bosom, the very throne of pity and of love!" He pressed his hands on his aching eye-balls, and paused breathless and trembling.

With renewed tears the queen exclaimed: "I meant not to re-open thy closing wounds, my son!"

"They will close never," he sternly cried, "till death re-unite me to my beloved."

"And thinkest thou that woman's heart hath never known a love as constant, as fervent as thine own?"

"I know it hath."

"Then pause, my son, and ponder well, that on many a youthful form in these gathering hosts, the love, the hopes of woman's clinging heart are bound with desperate fidelity; and never dream that because such beloved being is struck down in honourable warfare, the agony of her who is left bereaved and broken-hearted, can be less than thine owe. My mission here,"—and she threw herself on her knees before him,—

“is to implore thee on behalf of those hapless beings, the light of whose existence depends on thy word ; in behalf of the happy homes which thy desolating troops will ravage and destroy,—in behalf of the helpless infants whom they will render orphans ! Nay, attempt not to raise me, save by the promise that thy just vengeance shall fall only on the guilty, who have deserved it.”

“ Rise, O queen, or I am deaf to thy words !” exclaimed Pedro, gently constraining her to resume her seat,—“and believe me, ’tis solely to bring them within reach of my arm, that I have resorted to these extreme measures. Have I not offered peace to the king, on the condition that he deliver to me the assassins ?”

“ But, my son, the terms are not in his power to grant. The villains waited not till his mind had sufficiently cooled from the rage to which they had goaded him ; too crafty were they to tarry until Alphonso had distinctly seen the hideousness of the crime they had hurried him to sanction ;—the instant it was perpetrated they

fled. Oh, believe me, my son ! the king hath been the victim of a fiend's artifice ; every failing of his nature,—nay, even his best feelings,—and above all, the excessive affection which attaches him so warmly to thine own son Ferdinand, were rendered by the tempters subservient to their purpose. Yes, they persuaded him to believe that his darling was to be sacrificed, in order that the son of Inez might succeed thee on the throne."

"And is it possible that King Alphonso could be prevailed on to believe so vile an insinuation against one"—and his voice grew soft and tremulous—"who could not harm, even in thought, the meanest thing formed by the Creative hand?"

"Such was indeed his weakness ; aided by the testimony of some vagrant peasant, who overheard, and doubtless mis-stated, a conversation which took place in the garden of your quinta, of which Ferdinand and the future succession was the subject."

“Ha!” exclaimed the prince; and question following question, the scene in the garden was narrated by Don Pedro as it really occurred, and by the queen as it was reported to Alphonso;—for the king had repeated it to her, in justification of his vindictiveness.

In the conversation that followed, the queen showed Don Pedro that his sire suffered scarcely less from the treachery of Caelho than those who were its immediate victims. When she informed the prince that it was supposed the assassins had taken refuge in Castile, he abruptly inquired, if, since his departure, d'Ercilia's palace had been searched. On the queen replying in the negative, he relapsed into a moody silence; but still undiscouraged by his stern denial of her prayer, she continued to urge it with gentlest importunity.

She showed how the most worthy and venerable of the nobles, with the flower of the veteran troops, had determined on defending their king to the last; and prayed her son to

spare for his own service their devoted loyalty. She called the Bishop de Brega to bear testimony to Alphonso's failing strength, which would probably in a few years place in Pedro's hands as much power over his enemies as he could obtain by contending with his sire. But the prince listened to all in unbending silence. At last she spoke of his sister,—her hopes, her fears, and the design of Alphonso to give her in marriage to a foreign prince ; and having painted in glowing terms the woe of the princess, she informed Don Pedro that her liberty of choice was now dependent on his word.

A mother's prayers,—a sister's happiness,—joined to the various arguments so tenderly urged by the loved voice of that revered parent, shook by slow degrees the steadfast purpose of the Infant ; and when at length he knelt at the feet of the queen, and kissing her hand, murmured,—“Thou hast conquered, O my mother!” the two silent spectators knew that Portugal was saved !

Ere another week had passed away, the troops were disbanded, and all dread of war at an end. When, in fulfilment of a condition of this un-hoped-for peace, Pedro caused the dwelling of Caelho to be searched, documents were found, supposed to have been in his hasty flight overlooked, or forgotten; which betrayed his hidden motive for possessing himself of the unfortunate Inez. They unfolded a lengthened system of treachery; being a treasonous correspondence with the Castilian king, who promised him, in requital of his perfidious betrayal of the councils of his suzerain, the confiscated estates of Don Sebastian de Castro; provided he could obtain a sanction for the transfer by wedding the daughter of that noble.

The shock of this discovery, and the decease of the queen,—who having seen her daughter commence her noviciate, calmly expired,—completed the ruin of Alphonso's health. Not long did he survive the deep humiliations which had been inflicted on his haughty spirit.

Whilst these events occurred, De Lacy had repeatedly sought an interview with Abu Amir, but without success ; even Manuel was inaccessible to his inquiries ; and, distracted with fears for the immured Azayda, the lover watched for hours her deserted garden, in the hope that some lingering memory might induce her to visit it. He had been spared his anxious vigils, however, had he known that Abu Amir, ever fearful of another attack from the murderous Gitano, who had hitherto eluded every effort to bring him to justice, had years before walled up every approach from the quinta to that fatal spot.

One evening immediately subsequent to the accession of Don Pedro to the throne, as De Lacy, bent on his usual melancholy vigil, passed the monastery of San José, situated in one of the principal streets of Lisbon ; a figure closely wrapped in a long and hooded cloak, left the religious house. It was one of those innumerable links, that, like a remembered scent or sound, serves to recall ideas long since past, and almost

obliterated ; Sir Alfred's thoughts were thereby led to that springtide visit to the church of St. George, whence just such a figure followed him to the spot where he was attacked by assassins. It recalled, too, many a splendid religious ceremony, and the glorious interior of many a venerable fane, with which was connected in his mind, a figure like that he now beheld ; who, without participating, ever appeared to be content with coldly gazing on the scene around him. He had abundant opportunity for making his observations, for the unknown took the road the knight was pursuing ; even after they left the city they both continued on the same route, and at length, Sir Alfred's curiosity respecting the stranger became tinged with an uneasy impatience, which was not lessened when he beheld him leave the high road, and approach the dwelling of Abu Amir. A jealous pang shot through De Lacy's heart,—“It is some secret suitor,” he inly thought, “whom Abu Amir is endeavouring to force on Azayda's acceptance !

—hence the harsh denials that have met me here !” He silently followed the muffled figure, until doubt was changed into certainty by his approach to the open portal ;—then darting towards him, he with irresistible impetuosity tore off his disguise !

With what astonishment, regret, and consternation, was Sir Alfred filled,—when his rash act revealed to him the features of Abu Amir ! “ Do mine eyes inform me arightly ?” he exclaimed. “ Is it possible that the father of Azayda left but now the house of the Benedictines ?”

The countenance of the Moor,—which in the moment following the rude affront grew black as night—cleared, and he beckoned the Christian to follow him into the mansion. Grateful for a chance, that, however apparently adverse, gave him leave to breathe beneath the same roof with his beloved, Sir Alfred gladly obeyed ; and the instant they paused within the outer hall, explained the thoughts which had led him to commit so rude an assault.

The Moor smiled as he replied,—“ Blame not thy memory,—’tis more faithful than thou dreamest ; for know, O Christian, that it was indeed myself whom thou didst behold on those occasions to which thy words allude. Captivated by the solemn beauty of the Christian functions, I have for years been in the habit of stealing secretly to every spot where some more solemn festival hath been celebrated with unusual observance ; not that a thought of its faith entered my heart, but because my melancholy spirit was soothed and elevated by the touching strains and eloquent exhortations which I heard in those solemn temples. Nor do I regret my custom, though no worthier motive prompted it ; for thereby doth the earth still possess one, who hath a place most near my heart. Yes, De Lacy,—but for my visit to the chapel of St. George, in yon mountain lugar, thou hadst perished beneath the sword of the assassin !”

Surprise, and gratitude, and apprehension, succeeded each other in the eloquent countenance

of De Lacy; but Abu Amir, without pause, continued: "Thy well-proved worth, however,—thy love for my child,—and, oh, above all! the wondrous discovery that the pure mind of my angelic wife had been moulded by its teachings,—that she had asked my conversion with her expiring sighs,—urged me to a careful study of the Christian law.

Since we last met, my friend, I have had constant interviews with the illustrious teacher, formerly known to thee as the Prior de San José, but now the abbade of the same monastery. He opened to me the mysterious scroll which contains the promises and their conditions; and expounded it with the authority of an accredited teacher of the Most High. And in mine own dwelling have his words been re-echoed to my eager mind; for here Azayda and the good Manuel carefully recalled them to my memory. Each day has added to my convictions, and to-morrow I hope to accompany my only child in soliciting admission to holy baptism! Well

may thy soul be absorbed in mute thankfulness and benedictions, to Him whose powerful graces have conquered my stubborn spirit ! But lest my conduct to thee may have appeared ungenerous, let me not pause till I have explained it.

We have been for some time deeply engaged in preparation for the solemn engagements, on which we hope to enter to-morrow,—and on that day, when as regenerated Christians, we might consistently seek thy presence, we purposed to unfold all ; hence the orders given to Manuel and the slaves. And now, my friend, adieu—when to-morrow's noon is past, we shall expect thee here.”

“ I will ask but one question,” said De Lacy ; who perceived that the convert wished as far as it was possible, not to break the silence usually observed before a first admission to the sacraments :—“ what name takes Azayda at the font ?”

“ What name so sweet, so venerable, as that of her whom all nations call ‘ Blessed,’—the

virgin and mother !—martyr and prophetess !—
the spotless daughter of the prophet-king ?”

“ Oh happy choice !” replied the knight; “and
I pray thee, let her—for my sake—receive it in
its English form.—Let her be called Mary.”

“ I will tell her what thou askest,—and now
adieu. Till our next meeting reserve all in-
quiries ; employing the interval in praying for
one, who enters the vineyard at the close of day.
Adieu !”

Reverently obeying the fervent neophyte,
De Lacy restrained his eager impatience to
learn something more respecting Azayda ;—
and his heart swelled with wonder and thank-
fulness, and exulting hopes, as with a changed
aspect he bent his steps once more towards the
capital.

CHAPTER XI.

"One sole desire, one passion now remains,
To keep life's fever still within his veins,—
Vengeance !—dire vengeance on the wretch who cast
O'er him and all he loved that rainous blast.
For this he still lives on, careless of all
The wreaths that glory on his path let's fall ;
For this alone exists—like lightning fire,
To speed one bolt of vengeance, and expire !"

Moore.

"WE sent for thee, gallant friend," said the king, in order that thou mightest be one of the first to share our joy, in having at length ratified our treaty with Castile. The Spanish monarch agrees, on condition that we aid him with ten galleys in his war with the Aragonese, to deliver up to our long-eluded justice, the villains, Caelho and Gonçalez ; Pacheco having, as thou knowest, on the first news of our accession, fled, no one knows

whither." It was De Lacy whom Don Pedro thus addressed ; and the knight's expressive countenance bore witness to the satisfaction with which he heard the news, as he replied : " I rejoice indeed, my liege, that vengeance, though deferred, will at length overtake those guilty knights ! May I ask if it will be long ere they arrive in Lisbon ? "

" They are now, attended by a strong escort, on their way to the frontiers ; and will be delivered to such as we appoint to the important trust, at the citadel of Elvas.

" And now, De Lacy, inform me how speeds thy wooing, for we long to see thee happy, who hast so long and devotedly sought thy bride." Pedro sighed heavily, as his voice ceased, and De Lacy's countenance fell as he answered his royal friend. " Half sun, half shade, is the prospect before me, my gracious liege. Abu Amir no longer refuses me the treasure of his daughter's love, nor doth my betrothed coldly receive my vows ; but the king has not forgotten

the savage Gitano, who so ruthlessly robbed the gentle Moor of his domestic happiness?"

"All lives in our memory!" said Pedro, mournfully,—“proceed.”

“On consenting to receive me as his son, Abu Amir stipulated that ere obtaining my bride, I should use my utmost endeavour to discover the Gitano, or ascertain that he is certainly dead. ‘Otherwise,’ said Don Antonio, (such is the late Moor’s Christian name,) ‘my beloved child must still live in terror of his vengeance; perhaps even become (spite of all our precautions) its victim.’ Thus, O king, is the fulfilment of my hopes deferred to some future, perhaps far distant hour.”

“Thy voice hath despondence in its tones, my friend,—surely to find this wretched outcast cannot be so difficult?”

“He hath eluded the vigilant and unceasing pursuit of Don Antonio for many years.”

“Yet believe not that he will escape finally; rather trust that the wish of the apprehensive

father is heaven-prompted, as a means of bringing to justice one whom the earth loathes to endure longer. Hast thou no clue wherewith to commence the search?"

"None whatever. — There was, indeed, known to me some years ago, one who might perhaps aid me, could I but find him;—the haunts of this vagrant race were then well-known to him. But of him I have lost all trace;—I mean, my liege, the shrewd guide, Stephano!"

A deep groan burst from the king, and his voice trembled as he exclaimed: "Alas, De Lacy! what memories doest thou awaken!" He covered his face with his hands, whilst Sir Alfred, overwhelmed with regret at having inflicted a pang on that noble nature, stood in speechless confusion and distress before him. "Heed not this passing agony!" at length the king faintly said; "'twill soon be over." In a few moments he uncovered his face; and though its ghastly paleness bore witness to the

fearful intensity of his momentary anguish, he calmly said,—“ What thinkest thou, sir knight, of being joined with Don Gaspar de Carvalhao, in his commission to receive these felons?—the wild and mountainous roads over which that duty would lead thee, offer as good a chance as any, of meeting with some of the wanderers, from whom tidings might be obtained of their gaunt associate.”

“ I shall be most thankful for permission to join in the expedition; but if I might so far presume on the king's indulgent favour, I would request that I be not appointed as an official; in order that should an opportunity offer of tracing the Gitano, I may be at liberty to do so.”

“ 'Tis well thought on; be it then so. But thou knowest my impatience,—canst thou be ready to start this day?”

“ Certainly, my liege.”

“ Some two hours past noon Don Gaspar and his troopers leave Lisbon.”

“ I will not fail them.”

“ May success attend thee, De Lacy !—take with thee our best wishes !”

The knight raised to his lips the hand of the unhappy monarch, and with a low obeisance retired from the royal closet.

Punctual to his appointment, Sir Alfred De Lacy joined Don Gaspar and his troopers ; but without adventure, or aught occurring whereon to build a single hope, they reached Elvas. There they learned with extreme chagrin and disappointment, that the more important captive, the dark-souled Caelho, had escaped from the prison wherein they had confined him for the night. The closest scrutiny could not detect any collusion between him and his guards, and nought remained but to secure Gonçalez with redoubled precautions.

With heavy hearts Don Gaspar and his companions turned their steps towards Lisbon ; for they knew their sovereign would scarcely heed the possession of Gonçalez, since his arch-enemy had escaped him. Sad and dispirited therefore they

resumed the route over the sterile and mountainous region, which extended for many a mile ; and De Lacy scarcely ventured to encourage a hope, that amidst such wild and desolate scenes, even a Gitano should be found.

On the second morn of their homeward journey, as they, soon after sunrise, toiled up a narrow road which ascended the steep side of a mountain, the merry song of an arriero came down from its summit ; and soon afterwards the jingling bells of the foremost mule reached the ears of the advancing warriors. It was sweet to catch in that wild region, even such simple sounds ; and the troopers turned their upward gaze towards the coming stranger, ready to answer with glad response his cheerful greeting.

Soon the sturdy wight appeared, seated on his leading mule ; and occasionally addressing him with sundry familiar exhortations, and snatches of popular songs, to which the animal evidently listened, rejoicing in his master's cheerful voice.

The collar and head-stall of the dumb fa-

avourite were fancifully worked with variously-coloured worsteds, and decorated unsparingly with the bells and bosses, and prized figas, ever so fondly bestrewed on the beloved machos ; it was a strong, active, and well-formed animal, and evidently an object of peculiar care.

But though many an eye viewed with well-practised glance the firm-footed mule, De Lacy marked it not ; his attention being from the moment of his appearance rivetted on the rider ; and when on approaching nearer, the muleteer accosted the troopers with the customary devout ejaculation,—“God guard you, cavaliers,”—De Lacy shouted,—“ Well met, and in good time, old friend ! Thou art welcome as shade at noontide !”

The arriero's face, as the knight thus addressed him, wore a startled and apprehensive expression ; to which Sir Alfred replied : “Dost thou not know me, Stephano ?” The recognition soon became mutual, and De Lacy lost no time in requesting the aid of his quondam guide for the discovery of Cloton. Stephano did not deny

that he could be of service in the search; but shook his head,—cast wistful looks at his mule, and the long train of which he had the charge,—and observed, that he had now shaken off the hated Gitani, and, by the liberality of those to whom he formerly rendered such important services, had once more betaken himself to his old and beloved occupation; he therefore dreaded to become again involved with the vindictive race, whom a well-nigh fatal experience had enabled him to know too well.

“ Only give me a clue whereby I may discover this assassin :—I have told thee how deeply my happiness, and the safety of a noble lady, are concerned in securing him.”

“ The double villain ! to war on infants and gentle dames !”

“ Aye, 'twere a very charity to point him out to justice !”

“ Well, sir knight, I believe there are few, even of his own tribe, who would care to resent any act that should rid them of him for aye ;—hate

and fear are the only feelings he hath ever awakened among them ;—I will e'en tell thee all I know." Glancing cautiously around him, Stephano drew the knight still more apart from his companions, and thus addressed him :—" He whom thou seekest, together with two of his tribe,—next to himself, the veriest villains of the unhallowed crew,—met me so lately as yestereen, and tempted me to accompany them to Lisbon ; saying this was their first visit to Portugal after an absence of some years. I did not believe them, señor,—for if ever I beheld that grinning fiend Gheran, I saw him skulking upon the frontiers not long before the old king died. But that's no matter. They wanted me to join them,—as though I had not suffered enough through once permitting myself (then a heedless youth) to be drawn into one of their dark schemes. 'No, no,' quoth I,—'an honest man I was born to be, and an honest man I'll die !' They sneered at my resolve, talked of a certain miser's hoarded gold, which they wanted to be familiar with,—

and, in short, señor, I'll not deny that I gained enough from their tempting proffers, in case I would aid them, to give a tolerably correct idea of the spot where they may be found on to-morrow eve."

"Be quick, then, good Stephano; impart thy knowledge to me, and name thine own reward."

"No, señor, not for any price would I tell thee what thou askest; therefore speak not of reward, —money gained by such means would bring ill luck to my honest gains; and, so enraged was I, in truth, at finding myself once more beset by those swart heathens, that, had I not been warned by the past, their proposition would have moved me to warmest resentment; as it was, though I firmly refused to join them, I was careful to speak them fair. And now, sir knight, if I tell thee where the house standeth, beware thou whisper not my name, even to the birds of the wilderness; for Hamet and Gheran are powerful among their people, and should I be suspected of having caused their capture, the mountain eagles would soon feast on Stephano!"

“ On the honour of belted knight, I promise thee, never even to think on it deliberately !” replied De Lacy with solemn earnestness.

Stephano without further hesitation described the exact situation of the house which had tempted the Gitani to return once more to Lisbon. Having repeated anew his caution to the knight, the arriero resumed his song and rode on his way.

De Lacy now left Don Gaspar and his troopers. Pushing on with the utmost expedition, he succeeded in reaching Lisbon on the following day ; but at so late an hour, that he had only time to secure the assistance of four algauzils and their commander, and concert with the latter the plan of operations, ere it was time to commence them.

The knight presented himself alone at the Jew's dwelling, purposing to apprise him of the intended attack, and the assistance that was prepared to protect him ; but every effort to obtain admission proved fruitless. The dusk of evening was

rapidly deepening the gloom of the narrow street, —the lateness of the hour admitted of no delay, —he therefore ventured to try the strength of the obstinate barrier; and the ease with which he forced it open, proved that its fastenings had been but of the slightest description. No one greeted or opposed the knight on his entrance. Time was pressing—the alguazils in various disguises followed him one by one,—and reserving all anxiety for the dwellers in so lone a dwelling to a future moment, they gently drew the bolts of the door, and secreted themselves near it.

Not long had they been so concealed, when the bursting of the crumbling door-posts warned them that the robbers were at hand;—the next moment the three Gitani entered with cautious and noiseless steps, and were permitted to pass unmolested for some distance along the narrow corridor. Then with a loud shout, that echoed through the silent chamber, and reverberated along the numerous winding passages, De Lacy

burst from his concealment, followed by his companions. The Gitani, overcome by surprise and fear, and only prepared for the resistance of a weak old man, were easily disarmed and bound.

Scarcely were they secured, however, and all doubts of their identity removed by the striking of a light, when a most hideous noise resounded through the dwelling ;—fearful shrieks,—and howlings,—resembling less the frantic ravings of insanity, than the terrific cries of a demoniac. For an instant all listened,—both captors and prisoners,—aghast and motionless ; but starting from his momentary trance of surprise, De Lacy commanded two of the alguazils to guard their captives with naked weapons, and leaving with them the taper, bade the rest follow him.

With difficulty they groped their way through the dim and narrow passages, guided by the horrible cries, and sounds of heavy blows and hurried steps, which as they advanced grew every moment louder. Soon they perceived a light stream from an open door at the extremity

of a narrow passage; and the bravest of those resolved hearts beat more quickly, as the most blasphemous and desperate curses fell on their ears, in tones of more than mortal fury and despair. Quickening their steps, they now entered with drawn swords, the room whence the light proceeded; it was the apartment wherein the aged Joas usually dwelt,—the same which contained that secret closet, in which he concealed his glittering hoards. A small lamp shed a dim light through the chamber, the atmosphere of which was rendered opaque by clouds of dust; and the causer of this terrible uproar rivetted at once all the attention of the beholders. It was the being from whose lips, convulsed with horror, the fearful sounds proceeded which had drawn them thither. In his hands appeared fragments of bones and tattered rags, which he was dashing, with the fury of madness, on all sides, so that the room was strewed with them in every part. Unobservant of those who regarded him with superstitious fear, or disgust, or pity, he continued to

vociferate with looks of frantic horror, incoherent and dreadful words, which might have been coined in hell.

“Heed him not !” said De Lacy, as the men drew back with superstitious awe. “Heed him not ! ’tis some wretched maniac, whom ’twill be a mercy to bear from this dismal abode.”

Reassured by his words, they now rushed upon and overpowered—though not without a violent struggle—the raving wretch, to whose robust powerful frame madness had lent additional strength ; and as he resisted for a while their efforts to bind him, he incessantly exclaimed,—“I did not do it ! I swear by all the fiends in hell ! I did not do it !”

There was something in his voice—though incoherent, hoarse, and broken—that struck with familiarity on De Lacy’s ear ; and again and again he turned to gaze on those haggard features ; but distorted by horror, and rendered vacant by the wild gaze of insanity, he saw nothing there to recognise. Not so the lunatic ; for when his

limbs were firmly bound, and further struggles rendered impossible, his wandering glance was attracted by De Lacy's earnest gaze ; and suddenly bursting into a frantic laugh, he by one convulsive effort tore his hands from their bonds, and pointing to De Lacy, shouted,—“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! —Ha ! ha !—so thou art come at last !—But 'tis too late !—I tell thee 'tis all too late !—Ha ! ha !” As his wild laugh faintly died away, his dilated eyes slowly closed, his limbs grew relaxed and powerless, and he sunk down motionless and insensible.

Once more De Lacy approached him, convinced that his ear had not been deceived. Holding the lamp near his pallid face, which was now calm and undistorted, and considering it for a moment, he exclaimed,—“ Just and righteous Father ! what do I behold ?—'Tis he !—'tis the arch-traitor !—'tis Caelho !”

Well did the guards know how important was the capture of that vile noble ;—they eagerly bound him with redoubled caution, whilst

De Lacy, wondering what could have brought them there, and in such guise, carefully scrutinised the apartment. The dust, now partly settled, was gradually forming a thick crust over the miserable furniture ; 'twas easy to guess that it must have been the accumulation of years of undisturbed quietude. As he gazed around, an open door at one corner of the room attracted him, which he had scarcely approached, when he descried some object dangling from a large nail on its inner side ; but he started back with horror on finding that it was a human skull ! He called the alguazils, and pointed out what he had observed. After brief expressions of wonder and dismay, seals were placed on the door of the apartment and that of the dwelling,—and they hurried from the spot with the three prisoners, and the still insensible noble.

Great was the surprise of Don Gaspar de Carvalho, when the first news that greeted him on entering Lisbon, was, that Caelho was safely immured in the traitor's prison ! To the same

place, though a separate cell, was Gonçalez conveyed ; and crowds collected, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, to catch a glimpse of one who had obtained so fearful a notoriety.

CHAPTER XII.

"Jennettes of Spain that ben so white,
Trapped to the ground with silver brighte."

THE wide road by which Lisbon communicates with the northern provinces, is thronged with people. The whole population, not only of the city, but likewise of every adjacent village and hamlet, appear to have poured forth, to witness a spectacle unprecedented in the annals of the world !

A splendid pageant is slowly winding through the rugged road,—preceded, and followed, and on each side surrounded by royal guards. Brightly glitter in the morning sun-shine, the gorgeous accompaniments of chivalry ; emblazoned shields and jewelled foot-cloths, and

broidered surcoats and waving plumes. Whilst above, float gorgeous banners and bannerols, and pennons; heavy with golden embellishments, and glittering with gems, the brightness of which are well-nigh surpassed by the flash of polished brassard, cuirass, and helm.

Triumphant strains too,—such as might welcome a glorious sovereign on taking possession of a disputed realm,—swelled and gushed and pealed around; whilst from the metropolis which they were now approaching, rang the most joyous and exultant peals that could be conjured from its countless bells.

As the glorious procession neared the city, the wide gates were thrown open, the draw-bridge lowered, and when the preceding guards followed the crowd which had tumultuously rushed into the capital, a wild shout—echoed and prolonged by the following thousands—rang forth a boisterous note of welcome. But notwithstanding all these demonstrations of joy and triumph, a strangely solemn expression sat on every coun-

tenance,—a look of wistful wonder and pale anxiety ;—and every eye, as it approached, was fixed with awe and suspense on a closed litter, borne by four snow-white mules, and surrounded by the noblest of the land. It appeared in the very centre of the cavalcade, and was entirely covered with white satin, decorated with heavy fringes and ornaments of gold. Of the same costly metal was the embroidery of the royal arms that embellished each side of the litiero, and the flowing trappings of the mules ; and on the summit of the spotless canopy appeared a golden crown, above which streamed the royal banner. It was followed by palfreys, all of snowy whiteness, bearing the noblest dames of Portugal ; no lady of rank, within the realm, unless prevented by sickness, being permitted to absent herself from the royal pageant.

And immediately preceding the closed vehicle appeared the king, on a magnificent war-horse, whose coat was stainless as his embroidered

trappings, which glittered with many a priceless gem. The monarch was completely armed ; but wore over his curiass, a surcoat of royal purple enriched with jewels, and around his plumed helm a circlet of gold. Countless was the train of knights and warriors that preceded and followed their sovereign :—and all were in full armour, save such as held high posts in the royal household, who were distinguished by robe, or badge of honour.

Slowly wended the procession through the crowded city, the acclamations of the people mingling with the notes of joy that attended it on all sides ; whilst taking the nearest road to the principal entrance of the king's palace.

And soon the spacious anteroom of the state apartments was crowded with illustrious visitors, —though still, on each wan and anxious face, dwelt a strange look of awe and expectation ; and none seemed inclined to break the solemn silence which reigned among them.

When at length the portals of the presence-

chamber were thrown open, a scene of splendour was revealed, which even those accustomed to the glories of courts had not anticipated. The spacious walls were hung with draperies of cloth of gold, surmounted by innumerable banners, and adorned with festoons of the most brilliant flowers. Above the elevated dais at the upper end of the regal apartment, was suspended a wide and lofty canopy, all newly decorated, and elaborately enriched with velvet and gold and heraldic devices. Over it hovered the royal eagle, with wings extended as if about to swoop upon his prey; and on the steps of marble, which it shadowed, appeared two stately thrones. On one of these sat the king,—divested of his armour,—robed and crowned and sceptred;—and from his shoulders the royal mantle of purple velvet, with ermine lined, and clasped at the throat by a large brilliant, fell in heavy folds. On the throne beside him appeared a female figure, closely veiled, silent, and motionless! Towards her, every eye was directed with a solemn

earnestness, for they knew that the devoted love of Pedro had raised from the grave, where she had long slumbered in peace, the undecayed form of Inez de Castro, in order that her fame might be transmitted to posterity untarnished by a single doubt ; intending, too, that she should not be deprived, by the base deed which had torn her from love and life, of the dignity and honours of a sovereign princess !

On the footstool of the king sat his eldest son Ferdinand, and beside the queen's chair, his second son Alphonso ; whilst near the throne stood one, whose appearance there was incomprehensible to the greater number of the assembled court. It was Henriquez de la Zibrieria, who had refused every proffered boon but this,—to witness the last triumph of her he had loved so well. He was attired as usual, but his form was shrunk to a shadow, and his intelligent features sharpened. A hectic flush glowed on his sunken cheeks ; and his dark lustrous eyes, all unobservant of the glorious scene around him,

rested immoveably on the lifeless form, that, robed and crowned, and decked with all the emblems of royalty, sat invested with all the splendour and dignity of a queen.

Around the throne of their sovereign now gathered the gallant nobles, whose ancestors had founded the liberties of Portugal;—that noble race of warriors, which in an after age was extinguished on the fatal field of Alcazar, where the rash Sebastian, by depriving his country of her choicest spirits, inflicted an injury beneath which she hath not yet ceased to languish. But the king arose;—and the most perfect stillness reigned around, as he addressed his assembled court.

His voice, at first slightly tremulous, gathered strength as he proceeded; and its deep mellow tones reached the furthest portions of the royal chamber. “We have called around our throne, the fairest, noblest, best, of our faithful lieges, in order that they may display their sympathy for the ruined peace of their sovereign, by performing an act

of justice. Too well do all here know, that a noble and innocent lady hath been basely slain,—to the dishonour of our realm, and deep disgrace of Christian knighthood. But though we believe, that not one of our subjects doubts the lawful marriage of Donna Inez,—yet, as few have had proof thereof, such evidence shall be laid before you this day, as shall leave the world, and future ages, no room to doubt the honour of Don Pedro's queen.

“The Bishop of Guarda shall bear witness that he, when Abbade de San José, procured from Rome the dispensation which removed the only barrier to our union ; and in the church of his convent pronounced the nuptial blessing.

This duty done another remains to be accomplished. The queen and consort of your sovereign—denied in life her regal honours—shall receive *in death* the fealty of her lieges ; and the grandson of Alphonso, the future monarch of this realm—will, as her first subject, be first to declare his homage.”

Don Pedro resumed his seat. At the same moment a small side door was opened by a page who stood beside it, and twelve armed guards entered; in the midst of whom walked the dishonoured nobles, Gonçalez and Caelho.

Instead of knightly garb, they were clad in prison livery, and in the place of the trappings of chivalry, were loaded with iron gyves and manacles, which clanked on their recreant limbs, and encumbered their faltering steps. The frantic ravings of the chief assassin had been exchanged for a sullen calm; but both, as they entered that stately room, wherein they were wont to be regarded with deference by the noblest of their peers; appeared to shrink under the consciousness, that every eye now fixed upon them, expressed the extreme of indignation and abhorrence.

They were made to kneel, all fettered as they were; and the sensation occasioned by their entrance having somewhat subsided, the Bishop of Guarda advanced towards the throne. After

having read aloud the papal dispensation, he with a solemn oath attested the royal marriage; to which Don Gaspar de Carvalho, and Donna Isabel de Sourinha (the preceptress of the royal children), also made their depositions.

And now occurred that unprecedented scene, at which, after a lapse of five hundred years, the world hath not ceased to wonder.

Don Ferdinand, the Infant of Portugal, approaching the footstool of the dead, on bent knee reverently kissed her lifeless hand; and after him, nobles and statesmen, — knights and dames and dignitaries of the church,—all passed before that injured dust, and saluted it with the same homage as they would have rendered to a living queen. Among those who performed this solemn rite, appeared the gallant Englishman who had so warmly espoused the cause of the injured princess;—and the newly converted Mussulman, with his beautiful daughter, joined also in this wondrous act of homage.

During the ceremony, the monarch looked on

with stern satisfaction, and the eyes of the alchymist scrutinised with jealous watchfulness every one of the lieges that approached the queen. Nought, however, could he detect in the sad faces that approached to do her homage, but reverence, and awe, and painful regret. Whilst down many a cheek rolled the unbidden tear; as those who had known and loved Donna Inez felt how faint a tribute, was even this unexampled triumph, to the incomparable excellence, which had been so ruthlessly torn from the bright and happy destiny, by her virtues won.

The last homage having been rendered, the children of the murdered queen were led to their father's footstool, and their legitimacy was acknowledged by the whole assembled court.

Then the Garter-king-at-arms advanced to the right of the throne, and in a loud voice, commanded with the customary forms, Hernandez de la Sosia, and Hubert Eltringham to advance. "From our memory hath not faded," said the king, as the two youthful squires were conducted

before him, "the services ye both, when but stripling pages, rendered to our royal consort. Together, gallant youths! shall ye receive the honours, which, in the same glorious cause, ye earned so well!" The young men, attended by their escudors, or shield-bearers, and by several knights who had on the previous day prepared them, according to the laws of chivalry, for the prized honours of knighthood, now stood before the throne. Their cheeks were somewhat pale—reminding the spectators of the strict fast and wakeful vigil which ever preceded the solemn installation of a Christian knight,—and an humble consciousness of the duties to which they bound themselves by their vow, attempered the triumph of each eagle glance.

By the order of the king, the golden spurs were bound upon their feet, the swords girt to their sides; and, by the practised hands of belted knights, were they soon clothed in complete armour, saving the head, which remained uncovered. And now Don Pedro, as they knelt at

his feet, holding in their right hands the blades he had unsheathed and placed therein, receives with reverent mien the solemn vows which bind them to never flee from death in defence of their religion, their king, their natural lord, or their country ; replying as he strikes with his glittering blade the shoulder of each,—“ May God help thee to fulfil thy vow !”

They arose—and every knight present pressed forward to kiss the cheeks of their newly admitted brothers-in-arms, in sign of peace and mutual fidelity ;—which act of courtesy will be extended towards them, by every son of chivalry they shall for the first time meet, within the year.

With fervent attention did the young champions listen to the address of the king, who solemnly exhorted them to never weary of the duties imposed on them by their vow—to diligently cultivate the four cardinal virtues—to be sparing in their meals—to read and meditate frequently on deeds of chivalry—and to be ever ready to defend a brother-in-arms, and all

who were distressed or succourless ; especially ladies, widows, or orphans. "And if ever,"—he thus concluded—"bravery, and honour, and fidelity, displayed in early youth, be glorious presages of future fame,—ye shall prove fit representatives of the united gallantry that enabled Portugal to be free."

This stately ceremony ended, one less brilliant, though equally illustrative of the great object of the monarch, followed. Numerous individuals who had aided Inez de Castro during her days of obscurity and suffering, received at the hands of the king, such honours or rewards as were most suitable to their circumstances.

Among these appeared Donna Isabel, Donna Beatrice, the mother of the Alchymist, the faithful and yet mourning Sanchiza, and the stout Perez, who being of humble birth, and therefore not eligible to receive knighthood, was appointed Cacedor Mor, or chief fowler to the king.

And when every honour and reparation had been rendered to the fame and memory of the

deceased princess, which power could command or undying love suggest ; that long deferred and wondrous triumph—the utmost this earth could now achieve for Inez De Castro—terminated.

On the evening of the same day, a cavalcade, the very reverse of the one which morning had witnessed, assembled before the palace. All were now attired in the livery of woe,—for the remains of the lamented Inez were about to be conveyed with royal state to their last abode.

Not, however, to the secluded convent of Santa Clara, near Coimbra, did they retrace their steps. The place of sepulture selected for that wept-for dust, was the magnificent monastic pile, of which a native writer has said—“its cloisters are cities—its sacristy a church—its church a basilic !” In the southern transept of that glorious fane,—by torch-light, on the evening of the day which had beheld her triumph—did they finally commit her to the grave ; and royal and crested heads bent for the last time over the

closing vault, to obtain a parting glimpse of the beloved being whose untimely death had awakened a nation's sorrow.

And ere long the pointed arches, and crocettèd pinnacles, and statued niches of a splendid mausoleum, arose above her quiet but not lonely grave; where also a recumbent effigy of white marble, clad in royal robes, and adorned with a diadem, faintly endeavoured to preserve some memory of the grace and loveliness, and sweet intelligence, which yet lived in the hearts of those who had known and loved her well.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Revenge is a luxury, to those who *can* rejoice in it at all, so inebriating, that possibly a man would be equally liable to madness from the perfect gratification of his vindictive hatred, or its perfect defeat.”—*Mag.*

To the dead, every duty had been rendered, with fervent and scrupulous exactness;—it now only remained for justice to be done to her ruthless foes. On the day following that of the interment of Donna Inez, Caelho and Gonçalves were led in chains, covered with every badge of ignominy, and accompanied by the groans and maledictions of the citizens; to the spot where their sentence awaited them. Evidence was not wanting for their condemnation, and the vindictive feelings of Don Pedro,—every generous impulse of whose nature appeared converted

into ruthless severity, whilst his harsher feelings were unchecked by a single thought of mercy,—demanded for them the severest death that could be inflicted by the laws.

Their trial was followed by that of the Gitani:—against Hamet and Gheran no evidence appeared that could affect their lives,—for though Caelho could have furnished abundant proofs of their abduction of Donna Inez from the royal gardens, and wounding her page; yet the evidence of a knight bereft of his spurs, and degraded from his order, availed nothing in a court of justice. Convicted, however, of their attempt on the house of the Jew, they were sentenced for life to the mines; whilst Cloton,—the infant slayer! was, on the evidence of the converted Moor, condemned to the stake.

Through the thronged streets were led the dishonoured knights, who found it no slight addition to their miseries, that, as partaking of the same doom, they had for their associate the disgusting Cloton.

They had alike treated with disdain the prof-
fers of spiritual aid which had been repeatedly
made to them ; and were together thrust into a
deep dungeon, called by the populace "the traitor's
hole." There, divested of light,—unless by such
glorious name could be called the sickly stream of
yellow air, almost opaque with noxious vapour,
that struggled down towards them from a small
aperture in the roof,—and hopeless of rescue,
they sunk down, reckless and despairing.

It was long ere their organs of vision became
capable of discerning any object within their
dim and dismal cell.—For a time each felt as if
a solitary prisoner there,—and when at length
the wretched nobles began to descry each other's
pallid and haggard countenances, each shrunk
from the vicinage—at the same time revealed—
of that most hideous visage, which glared on
them with the exultant malice of a rejoicing
fiend. Urged by mutual horror, they drew nigher
to each other ; but the miserable vagrant ex-
pressed his consciousness of the loathing with

which they regarded him, by exclaiming—"Aye—ye may even yet hold aloof from the despised Rommany,—but a few hours hence our ashes shall mingle at the stake, and who shall *then* distinguish between the dust of the proud and titled murderers, and that of the outcast Gitano?"

"Cease thy hideous croaking—vile hound!" growled Caelho, "or the very manacles that fetter these hands shall ensure thy silence!"

The wretched being spoke no more;—ignorant, reckless, and esteeming life as only a bubble, that had but to burst, and all was over, he had no regret for the past, nor dread for the future; and was satisfied to indulge in silence his exultation, that the dismal fate which had at last overtaken him, was to the utmost shared by two of the lordling race whom he had ever hated.

But between the two Portuguese, who now for the first time met since their seizure by the Castilian government, a whispered converse soon commenced.

They spoke of Pacheco's escape,—who (when

the Spanish monarch, in order to fulfil his agreement with Don Pedro, caused the city gates to be guarded, and no person permitted to pass them unexamined until the three criminals were secured) had been saved by a poor beggar, the daily recipient of his bounty. They discoursed, too, of their own hopeless doom, and gloomily dwelt on the measures each had used to avert it;—when at length Gonçalez exclaimed,—“But how couldst thou, having once escaped these blood-hounds, permit thyself to be recaptured?”

“Well may'st thou ask!” replied the other, striking his brow with his clenched hand; “well may'st thou wonder!—madman that I was!—Better have been a beggar, with life and freedom, than in the accursed plight to which my dread of want hath led me!”

“Well, but explain.”

“Ay, I may safely do so now,—no secrecy can save me,—no divulged crime darken my doom! Listen then,—and I will reveal to thee one act of my life, which all the shrewdness of my accusers

hath not enabled them to discover." Gonçalves regarded the haggard features so dimly revealed to him with no little wonder, and a strange creeping fear gathered coldly round his heart ; but a slight shudder alone revealed his feelings, and Caelho without heeding him, continued : "'Tis now some years since I found myself suddenly despoiled of a wealthy bride,—my coffers empty,—my lands burthened with heavy loans,—and claimants at the same time pressing me, whom to disappoint would have been to peril the exposure of all my secret schemes. I knew but one man who could aid me—but I also knew that I might as well ask a hungry wolf for the lamb he had just slain, as the usurer Joas for a single reis, unless I had a safe bond to offer. I therefore determined on employing the Gitani to terrify the old dotard ; but not forgetting that his clamorous tongue would quickly publish the extortion, if permitted the chance, I confess I was prepared to imprison him during the few years that might remain to him ; nor deemed it any

great severity, so I permitted him a bag of gold for his pillow. Well,—the Gitani had their orders, and watched, not far from the usurer's den, until I should give the signal, which was to be the consequence of Joas proving inexorable. —Think not I meant to touch his Hebrew flesh, or darken my knightly sword with his filthy blood! Yet what was the issue?—Oh, horrid, horrid thought! hence, hence, for thou lead'st to madness! Thou wonderest at this weakness, Gonçalves—well, listen—listen!”—and a mocking fiend seemed to speak within him, as Caelho proceeded. “It chanced, that whilst I conversed with this Hebrew dog! the peculiar feebleness of his gaunt frame struck me as it had never done before.—I swear to thee! there did not seem so much blood in his whole carcase as would suffice for a dish of frangaos empsopados;* and as I considered his sapless frame, it appeared to me less murderous to twist his long, wiry neck, than to crack the spine of a chicken! Some

* The Portuguese curry, made of a chicken stewed in its own blood.

fiend, too, whispered in mine ear,—“ Why summon the Gitani,—to increase the risk and lessen the gain ?” These dark thoughts were—I felt it—growing into my heart ; and the Jew the while, as if bent on soliciting his own destruction, kept fixed on me his stony eyes. Was it my fault that he exhibited not the slightest trace of human feeling ?—had he done so, some relenting thought might have been thereby awakened. But I saw that he rejoiced in my extremity ; and as he rubbed together his bony fingers, I knew that he was computing how much he should gain by my ruin. Oh, couldst thou have seen the poor craven’s look of surprise and terror, when suddenly drawing my sword, I went close beside him, and said,—‘ Come, Joas, ’tis dangerous to trifle with a desperate man !—thou must find me instantly a thousand gold pieces, or abide the sharp reasoner I hold here !’ What availed his cunning or hypocrisy ? each new attempt at subterfuge but doubled my demand ; and when it had reached ten thousand dieces, he suddenly turned and fled. Ha ! ha !

'twas too absurd that the shuffling and decrepid hound should strive to outstrip *me* ! But I was well pleased with the manœuvre, not doubting that he would take the way to his treasures. So I attempted not to stop his flight, though I was careful to keep him in view ; and when he would have entered a door, artfully concealed in the wall of a remote apartment, I rushed upon and secured him. Then it was, I so wrought on his fears that he gladly promised me all I asked. With many a groan he opened his golden stores ; but no sooner had he revealed the secret of their hiding, than (just to prevent future unpleasantries) I suspended him very comfortably on a nail in his own private door, and helped myself without further obstruction to his hoarded gold. I brought away sufficient to meet all my wants, and afford an ample supply for the future. . Aye, even the means of our flight to Toledo were a portion of those Hebrew savings."

The villain paused, and Gonzalez, with difficulty mastering the horror that overwhelmed

him on discovering how very a monster he had called his friend, sternly asked,—“But what hath the murder of the wretched usurer to do with thy durance here?”

“Everything,—as I will shew thee. When I left Elvas, I was not only without money, but even a portion of my clothes had been abandoned to facilitate my flight; and my case was the more deplorable, as lessening the chance of eluding my pursuers. My plans were necessarily laid with but scant deliberation. I knew the Jew's dwelling had not been disturbed; for all inquiries respecting him had been silenced by reports adroitly circulated by my emissaries, of his having undertaken a distant journey; thither, therefore, I bent my steps. The attempt was indeed dangerous, but I calculated that I should reach Lisbon, and (with good fortune) quit it again, ere the news of my escape arrived,—or, if it happened otherwise, I should never be suspected of having flown thither. Thou seest my object,—an all-powerful one indeed,—it was the treasure that I knew still remained in the Jew's coffers;

—for the prospect of being doomed to wander, poor and friendless, through the world, appeared to me then worse than death,—though now—but I proceed. Having procured a capote and a few pieces of money from a peasant, in exchange for a gem that I wore on my finger ; I hastened on my fatal journey, and reached Lisbon, as I had expected, ere any news from the frontiers had arrived. Evening was drawing on when I approached that gloomy and silent dwelling ; by a simple contrivance, I mastered, without injuring, the slight fastening of the door, which had never revolved on its hinges since it last closed on my departing steps. But ere I had penetrated far along the dim and dust-covered passages, it seemed to me that I heard the door (which I had made as fast as I found it) gently forced open. I paused for a few moments, and listened as intently as my throbbing pulses would permit, but heard no further sound. I believed myself the dupe of imaginary terrors,—and having lit a small lamp with which I had been

careful to provide myself, proceeded at once to the apartment containing the secret door. I had but just entered it, when a tremendous shout echoed through the desolate building, and was followed by a confused uproar of mingled shrieks, imprecations, and the clashing of weapons. I believed all the devils had escaped from hell, to greet me with that accursed welcome, —and the horror that chilled my blood, joined to my busy memories, left me scarcely the power to move. Fortunately, it occurred to me, that if 'twas a squabble 'twixt fiends of flesh and blood, it might lead to my detection,—I rushed towards the secret closet, and placing my lamp on the table that stood nigh, touched the remembered spring. It acted not so well as when the old man plied it daily, but at length, after repeated attempts, obeyed my faltering fingers. I threw the door wide open, in order that the long-pent air might escape; only intending to take refuge within the detested den, in case danger approached.

But just as the heavy door swung past me, a rattling, mouldy, fetid heap of bones, and dust, and tatters, fell on my face and breast! Oh horror! horror!—I was half buried beneath the loathsome carcass!—eyes, mouth, ears, nostrils, were choaked and poisoned by the detested Jewish dust, that well-nigh smothered me! The most frantic loathing—the most wild and torturing horror succeeded! I remembered in an instant the quivering form of the strangled Jew, and with furious despair dashed the mouldy bones of my victim about the room. Thousands of mocking fiends the while capered around me,—pointing, grinning, jabbering:—and all having the gaunt jaws and stony eyes of the wretched Joas!”

The fierce voice of the murderer, which had for some time been dreadfully agitated, now became tremulous and broken;—his breath convulsed, and caught with difficulty;—whilst damp dewdrops hung on his throbbing temples, and bathed his disordered hair. He paused for a few

moments,—then, with labouring breast, resumed. —“On a sudden they closed on me,—bound me—spite of my frantic struggles!—I swear ’tis true—I strove in vain against the triumphant fiends! For when I would have dashed them from me, there ever came, the fair, pale, mournful face of that——Hist! what sound was that?—heard’st thou a scream?”

“No, no!”

“I tell thee, still it came—the innocent face of that slain mother—even as when with hopeless eyes she gazed on my descending sword!—thou rememberest?—and called upon her husband—thou recallest?—That vision rendered me powerless!” Breathless with horror, the wretched being paused, and it was some time ere he resumed:—“When I awoke to consciousness I was in a dismal gaol.—But beside me,—still gazing towards me with meek, upturned glance,—that pale, imploring face appeared! And lo! there—nay shrink not from me—I swear to thee—’tis there—still there!”—and with strained eye-

balls, he pointed his quivering finger, and gasped for breath ; and the white foam was churned over his hueless lips as he strove to speak again !

“ Be calm,—be calm ;” said Gonçalez—himself the while all dismayed and pale. “ No wonder the recital of a scene which shook thy reason, should go far to deprive thee of it again !”

The murderer made no reply, but wrung the cold drops from his ruffled hair, and pressing his hands tightly over his starting eyes, strove to shut out the appalling vision. But in vain ! for its dwelling-place was in his own guilt-haunted mind.

Ah ! little did the thousands dream,—who, after witnessing the briefer deaths of Gonçalez and Cloton, stood on the morrow, with un pitying eyes, to see the last agonies of that miserable slave of malignity and selfishness,—how the tortures wrought on his quivering flesh, were but shadowy pains, compared to the intense agonies which had been by a more Mighty Vengeance

inflicted on his guilty soul. And thus he died : rejecting to the last all spiritual aid, and treating with sullen indifference, or scornful mockery, the patient exhortations that would fain have melted him to penitence,—that stern spirit passed away;—leaving on the spot where it parted from its defiled body, pale countenances, and trembling hearts, which for many a day shook not off the remembrance of the last moments of Caelho, the assassin !

CHAPTER XIV.

“ ‘Oh, let me not,’ quoth he, ‘then turne againe
Backe to the world, whose joyes so fruitlesse are,
But let me here, for aie, in peace remaine.’ ”

THE lonely quietude that had for so many years surrounded the peaceful dwelling of the converted Moor, is exchanged for the bustle of the banquet, and the sweet mingling of voice and lute, and silver-toned guitar. Its portal is decorated with flowers, and the most delicate perfumes burn in hall, and bower, and vestibule ; whilst the jealous seclusion of Moorish habits, gives way to the more social and cheerful arrangements of Christian manners. Smiles sit on every face, and words of joyous congratulation flow from every lip, for but few days have elapsed since the hand of the beautiful

heiress of the illustrious convert, was bestowed on the good and gallant Englishman, Sir Alfred de Lacy.

Auspicious were those nuptials, and honoured by the presence of the noblest and fairest of the realm. And the first few days of gaiety and congratulation being now past, the grave sovereign, whom all joy pained, save such as fell calmly and soothingly on his wounded spirit, came to spend in privacy a few hours with his early and valued friend. De Lacy led his royal guest over the mansion so long secluded with jealous care ; and as he displayed to the monarch's wondering eyes, the fastidious elegance and exquisite beauty of detail that were visible on every portion of its interior, he failed not to point out each spot that had been hallowed in his memory by its connection with the attachment he had so long cherished for his lovely bride. He conducted Don Pedro to the small garden once the plaisance of Azayda, now restored to its former beauty ; and there, in one of its bowers, they found Don Antonio perusing

a breviary. Having received his sovereign with his usual grave courtesy, he joined the twain, and with a calm cheerfulness of look and voice, which De Lacy had marked increasing with each succeeding day, directed the notice of Don Pedro to the numerous rare and beautiful shrubs that he had with unsparing cost and care collected within the small inclosure.

As they approached a spot, which, because it rejoiced in the vicinity of a perpetual fountain, and was neither exposed to the northern air, nor undefended from the heats of noon, had been selected for the abiding-place of all that was most tender and choice in the small plaisance; they perceived, carefully training a row of young orange-trees, the stooping form of Manuel.

“What a venerable old man!” exclaimed the king,—“his hair and flowing beard are white as snow.” At the sound of that voice the old man raised his head,—and Pedro hastily advancing towards him, cried,—“Ha! I cannot be mistaken!—my venerable monitor! Have I lost thee

so long, to find thee here?" The countenance of the patriarch was unmoved and calm ; but as he strove to bend his aged knee before his sovereign, the king caught him by the arm. " Not so," he exclaimed, " not so !—reserve the little strength that remains to thee for the service of the Most High ;—a short time will reverse our relative positions, and render me as far inferior to thee as erring man, though seated on a throne, is to heavenly seraph !

" Have we permission, good señor, to conduct to some shaded seat this revered old man ? We have much to say to him ; for in truth, we behold in him a valued though unknown friend."

De Lacy and his father beheld with amazement a scene so strange ; but gladly acceded to a request, which was too imperative to be evaded by the scruples of Manuel's humility.

In a few moments they were all seated in that secluded arbour, wherein the young mind of Lady de Lacy had caught its first hint of revealed truths. " And now," said Don Pedro,

“what treasure shall I barter with thee for the possession of this excellent old man? I know, Don Antonio, that on thy baptism thou didst give freedom to all thy slaves; but I presume that this venerable servitor, like the rest, remains with thee as a hired freeman?”

“Rather say, O king, as a valued friend; for by his means the light of Christianity penetrated within this abode of unbelief! O, believe me, Manuel had been free, years ago, had he desired it.”

“How!” exclaimed the monarch, “can one in whose heart every noble and generous sentiment is enthroned, be in love with slavery? Canst thou, who hast on many a lonely hill, or beneath the shade of forests, or in the hearts of peaceful valleys, started like a gliding vision before me, and enchained my soul with thy honied words,—who couldst discourse with the meekness of a saint, and the wisdom of a sage, on patriotism, and benevolence, and justice,—canst *thou* have been the while content to barter thy

freedom for the poor pittance that sufficed for thy daily wants ?”

The equal current of the old man's blood, which calmly flowed when honoured by his sovereign's condescending kindness and high encomiums, was not disturbed now that an implied reproach fell upon his ear. Drawing somewhat more erect, by means of the staff on which his hands rested, his bending form, but still remaining seated,—unabashed, and undisturbed ; he raised his un-reproachful glance to that royal countenance, and mildly answered : “ I knew this hour would one day come, and have long been prepared, at the time appointed, to reveal all ! If my conduct hath been strange, my motive at least was pure ; and however singular my design, its success will justify it. *Not* to satisfy thy curiosity, O king, still less to gratify aught of earthly feeling yet clinging *in this* corrupt heart ;—but that a convert may perceive the wondrous means whereby God hath conducted him to the truth,—do I reveal a history, which, save by myself, is unknown on earth.

“Sixty years ago there was not a knight in Portugal more extolled for his prowess and deeds of chivalry, than Don Theodoro d’Ayamonte. He loved, too, with all the passionate fervour of unreflecting youth. And thence arose a quarrel betwixt himself and a brother knight,—which grew at length so serious that it was appointed to be decided by single combat. In the presence of the noble and the fair, they opposed each other on the listed ground, and when, with a tremendous shock, their rushing steeds met in the centre of the field, the lance of Theodoro pierced the breast of his gallant rival.

“He instantly dismounted, and tore the helmet from the head of his adversary. But when he gazed on his face, now pale, aghast, and agonizing,—watched the heavy sweat of death burst over his manly brow, and steep his clustering curls,—marked the glazing eyes wander despairingly around, as if taking a farewell glance of light and life and love—and, oh, above all ! when he thought on the trembling soul, for ever

torn from all it delighted in on earth, and hurried so suddenly before its judge:—the enormity of the crime that had converted to senseless clay a thing so glorious,—the worthlessness of the object which had tempted him to strife, compared with what that slaughtered youth had lost in contending for it,—filled his heart with remorse and horror. He arose from the corpse an altered man. The shouts and congratulations that resounded for his victory, were torture to the penitent,—he rode from the lists mourning over his triumph, and the world saw him no more!—Sovereign of Portugal, thou behold'st him now!”

Pedro gazed on the calm old man with awe and wonder! in which his two companions could only so far participate, in that they had found the wreck of a fiery and gallant knight, in the meek and disregarded slave.

“*Thou* Don Theodoro d'Ayamonte!” exclaimed the king, after a pause of astonishment; “*thou* the marvel and mystery of the past age,

he whose strange story I have oft in my boyhood wept over, as I wearied my mind with vain conjectures respecting his fate ;—can it be possible that I find him in *thee* ?”

“ ’Tis even so, my liege ; but let that pass. I galloped from the listed plain o’er many an uncounted league, unguided by intention or object ; and when night was approaching, found myself in a wild and barren spot, containing no signs of verdure or cultivation save the narrow belt that encircled a small monastery. It seemed as though a house of refuge was pointed out to my tortured spirit ;—I rushed into the courtyard, delivered up my horse, my armour and braveries, to some one whom I found there, and left those walls no more for many years. The monks knew not who was the penitent who prostrate before the threshold of their humble chapel, besought them as they passed to their daily offices, to pray for the soul of one against whom the blood of his fellow-man cried to Heaven for vengeance ; but after a probation

much longer and more strict than ordinary; they admitted me into the community.

“None who knew him in the world, in his day of pomp and pride, would have recognised Fra Manuel, when after twenty years seclusion he left his beloved sanctuary at the command of his superior, to visit England. The fame of the exceeding sanctity, and admirable regulations of its religious houses, had reached our abode; and two of us were deputed to visit its most renowned monasteries; and gather from each, whatever, in rule or discipline, might tend to improve ourselves.

“Two years we spent in England;—wonder not, then, that I am familiar with its people and institutions.

“On a sudden all communications with our convent ceased. No order to prolong our stay—no recall arrived; and after waiting some months in vain for the commands of our superior, we decided (having availed ourselves to the utmost of our sojourn in the noblest monasteries of Eng-

land) to return to our beloved home. Alas ! no welcome awaited us there ; we found nought remaining of our dwelling but a smoking ruin ! The Moors had made an incursion into the land, and finding in their way our humble abode had pillaged and destroyed it. But few of the brothers escaped their fury, and they had taken refuge in other communities. We wept over the desecrated spot, whereon we had spent so many happy years ; then, as peace was restored to the land, we constructed from the ruins two small cells ; and having, after much toilsome search, found the altar-stone, we raised it from the rubbish, and erected above it a simple chapel. There we contentedly dwelt, for years, leading the lives of hermits ; and succouring with our advice and humble offices of charity, such peasants and travellers as visited our lowly cells.

But when my companion, who was far advanced in years, died ; and I lived there alone ; my solitude began to be rendered irksome by per-

petual thoughts of the cruelty that had dispersed our brotherhood,—until at length my conscience became disturbed with fears for my charity, and I appeased my scruples by offering up daily prayers for the conversion of the Moors. Soon an earnest desire for their enlightenment took possession of my heart ; and the reflection often haunted me, that the time I was spending in the wilderness, might perhaps be rendered available for the salvation of some benighted soul. So constantly was this idea presented to my mind, that at length, believing the impulse was from Heaven, I resolved to quit my beloved solitude. I had formed no plans for my guidance, leaving my destination to be decided by Providence ; but as I took a farewell glance of my peaceful cell, my eye fell on a small tree of roses, which I had taught, by an art for which our community had been famed, to bear variously hued flowers on a single stem. Regretting that a thing so fair and curious, should be left to bloom unseen in the wilderness, I made

it the companion of my travels, and supplying myself with a few lupins, and two or three aldobras—the produce of my little garden—commenced my aimless journey.

“ My feet were not unguided—they led me towards this spot ; from which, as I was passing by, its master issued,—and observing with much surprise the beautiful flowers I carried, he eagerly inquired how such curious growth was effected. I tendered him my services, and conscious that my skill in the cultivation of curious plants justified the offer, proposed that he should purchase me as his slave. After a short trial of my capabilities, the Moor approved of the bargain, and I received as the price of my freedom, such a sum as I had not owned for more than forty years.

For some time I wondered what I was to do with the money, when one day I met two young peasants absorbed in grief. I did not find it difficult to obtain their confidence, and learned that they had been for two years betrothed to each

other, with the consent of their parents, but poverty had forbade their union. They were then returning from Lisbon, the maiden having been too late to present her testimonials to the Benedictine sisters who bestow the "Queen's Gift." The full number had been accepted just ere her arrival. Perhaps thou mayest not know, señor De Lacy, that 'tis a charity instituted by the saintly wife of king Dennis; whereby dowers are every year bestowed on a certain number of virtuous maidens. I carefully inspected the testimonials—and having found that the sum I possessed nearly equalled that of which the young people had been disappointed, I gladly handed it to them, with the same feeling with which I should have transferred to the rightful heir, a trust I held for him.

The first step towards my great object was taken,—I had obtained admission into the dwelling of the unbeliever; but 'twould be long to tell how many discouragements I met with,—ere by prayer and example—the only means

I used,—I opened a way for the lessons of Christianity!

“ But the work hath at length prospered,—my task is accomplished ! And methinks the time is now come, when once more restored to some peaceful monastery, I may devote all my thoughts to preparation for Heaven.”

“ So be it, my best and most faithful friend !” exclaimed Don Antonio, whose tears had flowed repeatedly during the recital of the venerable old man ;—“ and with thee, shalt thou lead him, erewhile thy master,—for only in such a dwelling can he satisfy his earnest desire to supply for the time lost, and secure that immortal crown, which all win who sincerely strive for. Nay, oppose me not, De Lacy—I rightly read thy look of entreaty ;—thou and my beloved child can be happy in knowing that I am so likewise. My mind has long been decided—the words of this holy father have but unloosed my lips. Yes, I long to experience the calm, peaceful life of piety, and benevolence, and labour, and

holy poverty, which must form so complete a contrast to the selfish melancholy, and indolent solitude of my past existence !”

At the festal board, on that day, Manuel sat beside his beloved and grateful master.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Hermits there were, however, men of strong affections, who embraced the life of solitude through a sinking of the mind with sorrow, and a faintness that could have no other end but death. They were men who sought to hide, from the world's eye, a grief so profound, so tender, that only He who made the heart could sympathise with its sufferings.”

Digby.

“ ——— last scene of all,
And ends this strange eventful history.”

Opposite the entrance of the monastery of Alcabaza, alighted one bright autumnal morning, Sir Alfred de Lacy and his fair bride. Leaving steed and palfrey to the charge of their attendants, they paused ere more nearly approaching the mansion of peace, to survey with surprise and admiration the splendid range of building forming the western front, the extent of which was nearly six hundred feet.

Not more wonderful for its vastness than for its exquisite proportions, all surrounding objects were unnoted by the strangers, or viewed but with a passing glance. Even the lofty mountain range, that from the spot whereon they stood might have been seen sublimely towering in the distance, was scarcely marked ; and they turned from the marbled bosom of the Porto de Moz, and the rocky summits of the serra do Val de Venter, to gaze again on the exquisite pile which Alphonso Henriquez, the liberator of Portugal, founded to commemorate the capture of Santarem.

Like the humble virtues, of which it is the nurse and refuge, this beautiful monastery stands not boldly forth to catch the stray gaze of the passer-by ; but, as if shrinking from the eye of the world, lies away from observation ; being partly concealed in the northern extremity of a fertile and sheltered valley. And as the fame of the lowly anchorite collects around his cell the noble and the wealthy and the wise, to catch

from his gentle lips the meek lessons he hath learned in solitude ; so doth Alcabaga attract from afar, crowds of visitors, who venture across woods and wilds, to behold the splendid pile, erected by pious hands to the honour of God !

Whilst the noble travellers in silence gazed on the stately edifice, a cowed monk approached them, and with a meek salutation and welcome, invited them to partake of refreshment. By him they were conducted to the north-west wing, (where a range of stately apartments extending for more than two hundred feet, was devoted to the accommodation of guests, and called the *hospedario*,) where were placed before them, delicate viands, never used by the community, but freely provided for strangers.

An appointed brother having presented himself to conduct them over the monastery, De Lacy said,—“ Let us first visit the church, father ; for we have travelled with all speed since an hour before day, when we left Charnais ; in order to join in the mortuary mass daily offered at the altar

of the transept ;—and we would fain, if there be time, view the mausoleum ere the sacrifice commences.” The religious bowed, and led the way towards the church. As they passed along the silent cloisters, the knight again addressed his venerable conductor:—“ Methinks, good father, the fame of that beautiful tomb will draw largely on your hospitality !”

“ All who come hither are welcome, my son ! Alcabaga hath never lacked visitors. ”

“ Is the mausoleum completed ?”

“ It cannot be, during the life of the king,—his tomb and effigy being included in the original design.”

“ Ah, may it long remain unfinished ! Portugal cannot yet spare her noble but unfortunate monarch !” exclaimed the knight,—then pressing more closely to his heart the trembling arm that clung to his, he softly said,—“ When I gaze on thee, my beloved, my heart bleeds for Don Pedro !”

The timid glance of the young wife was

dimmed, as she gazed into the troubled countenance of her lord—" But for thy swift arm and powerful," she murmured—" I also had now been entombed,—perhaps forgotten !"

" Far from thee be such painful memories, sweet one ! Oh ! for the moment, when welcoming thee to my ancestral hall, in one of the fairest vallies of my native land, the recollection of the dangers that assailed us here, will but enhance our tranquil happiness !"

A silent pressure of that loved hand was the lady's sole reply,—and once more addressing the venerable verger, the knight asked : " Is the king often here ?"

" Ah yes ! many a solitary hour he spends beside yon tomb ! I pray Heaven that earthly love hath not too powerful an empire over his noble heart !"

" Time, that heals all wounds, will surely soften, though it may not obliterate, the cruel memories that have so changed his nature !" sighed the knight mournfully.

The monk shook his head, simply replying, —“ We must pray for him !” After a pause, he asked, —“ Didst thou know the deceased queen, sir knight ?”

“ Yes: I was some years ago slightly involved in the intricacies of her wondrous fortunes.”

“ Perhaps, then, thou canst unravel a mystery which has of late perplexed the brotherhood. It is this:—From the hour when the royal corpse first reposed in our church, the chapel in which it lieth hath never been without the odour of flowers; and since the tomb’s completion, the fair effigy ever weareth a living garland over its marble crown. No one hath seen the hand that placed them there; and believing it done by the secret orders of the king, the circumstance was at first little noted. But when he last departed hence, Don Pedro bade the porter thank the brethren for keeping around the beloved grave the sweetest and rarest blossoms. Since that time we have begun to

inquire by whom they are supplied, ever so fresh and fair.

“Some of our brothers have occasionally seen a dark figure glide from the church, at various and unusual hours; but we have, in the brief time that has elapsed since the king's last visit, only discovered that ever after the unknown has visited the church, the garlands are found freshly renewed.”

De Lacy at once declared his inability to solve the mystery. They entered the church; and when they had reverently approached the small stoup of water built into the wall at the entrance, the glory of the wondrous nave, with its tall, shaft-like pillars, and groined roof, absorbed all the attention of the strangers. The chancel, too, in all its original and undiminished beauty, met their admiring gaze; for no rude hand had as yet ventured to conceal the appropriate symbolism of its exquisite decorations, with barbarous pagan columns and corresponding ornaments, such as now disfigure it.

Then entered they with reverent feet the southern transept ; all the glory of the building failing to arrest the steps of the strangers, whose hearts drew them to a spot so endeared to human sympathies. There they found the object of their journey—the mausoleum erected by Pedro to the memory of his murdered queen ;—and as they beheld, faithfully preserved in the spotless marble, her beautiful and innocent countenance, the silent tears gushed forth, and memory grew busy with the past. “ Behold ! ” said the monk, “ the fair coronet of white and fragrant flowers almost conceals the diadem ! How beautifully do they harmonize with the hushed and hueless features ! And not long have they been here, for the dews still hang on flower and leaf. Thus are they always arranged, —this cluster clasped by the delicate hand,—that wreath entwined above the queenly brow. Another, too, has always been placed within the slender fingers that gather the folds of the royal mantle ;—it hath been omitted now, however—or

perhaps hath fallen down." As the visitors checked their tears to mark the mysterious blossoms, the good father went round the tomb, in search of those he missed; but when he had passed the feet of the effigy, he started, and uttered a cry of surprise, which drew his companions to his side.

With what astonishment did they behold, extended beside the tomb, a motionless figure, enveloped in a dark cloak, and apparently in calm repose. "He sleeps!" whispered the monk, as he advanced to remove the hood from the silent features; and in that act revealed the missing nosegay, which was clasped in the slumberer's attenuated hand. De Lacy bent eagerly forward,—but not by him were observed the blossoms culled in vain,—he anxiously scanned the wan and sharpened features, on which, it was apparent at the first hurried glance, the sleep which knows no waking had settled eternally.

The knight lifted the slight form in his robust arms, and bearing it from the dim spot whereon

it was found, laid it, just where the morning light came down ; steeped in the glorious hues, wherewith saint and martyr, symbol and emblem, were depicted on the storied window. It was a sad sight for those who gathered round, to behold the radiance of the gem-like light play over, without reviving, that pallid form ;—to find less warmth in that thing of human mould, than in the marble floor, which burnt beneath the fervid rays of the morning sun ! They marked the long flowing locks of dark and silken hair, which to the trembling touch were damp and cold,—they viewed the hollow cheeks, the beautiful but hueless lips, around which sorrow and suffering had traced their characters ; whilst beneath the wide and lofty brow the eye-lid drooped its long mournful lashes, but half enclosing the large orbs whose light was quenched for ever !

The monk was the first to speak. “ Behold the secret decorator of the tomb ! ” he said, “ the last effort of this feeble hand, was to place the flowers it still grasps, within the

marble fingers,—than itself not now more cold or lifeless.”

“I should know that melancholy countenance,” murmured De Lacy,—“and those flowing curls—and this attire”—he continued, drawing aside the cloak.—“Ah me! ’twassurely at the palace I saw him last,—beside the throne. Yes,—’tis the alchymist,—they called him, Don Henriquez !”

De Lacy was right, it was the young, the talented, the broken-hearted Zibrieria !

They made him a grave beside the small church which stands in the village of Alcabaça, not far from the monastery. Amongst the pious monks his memory long remained, and daily masses were for years offered up for his soul’s repose ;—but the fair orange-flowers bloomed never more above the lady’s grave !

CONCLUSION.

Six centuries have passed away,—and the iron tramp of war, the innovations of changed manners, the silent tread of the ceaseless destroyer, Time, and the crash of nature's direst convulsions,—have either destroyed, or so changed as to defy recognition, most of the places described in the history now concluded. But still may the traveller behold the remains of that fair home where Pedro the Just shared with his beloved wife, Inez de Castro, a few years of such unalloyed felicity as seldom falls to the lot of mortals ; and that fountain still flows, beside which an ineffaceable stain was by her ruthless murder affixed for ever on the knighthood of Portugal. The deep sympathies of the nation, which even now cling around that mournful spot,

have named the latter the "Fonte des Amores,"—the former the "Quinta des Lagrimas" or House of Tears !

In the monastic church of Alcabaca, too, may be seen even now, so much as the desecrating hands of modern infidels have spared, of the beautiful mausoleum erected by the widowed monarch to her memory, to whom he owed all he had ever known of earthly happiness ! There may those lovely and innocent features be still descried ;—and on the tomb that in a few years arose beside it, the stern, majestic countenance of her royal husband even now wears the traces of that unceasing regret, that accompanied him to his early grave !

Nor shall this record of those, who passed from earth in a far distant age, be wholly uninstructional ; if, while we read, we be careful to remember, that reaping the harvest sown by their good or evil deeds, they are all **LIVING STILL !**

THE END.





